The Camp at Gravel Point

By
Clara
Ingram
Judson

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THE CAMP AT GRAVEL POINT

SHE SWUNG TWICE OUT OVER THE WATER AND THEN JUMPED

The Camp at Gravel Point

By

CLARA INGRAM JUDSON

Author of "The Junior Cook Book," "Cooking without Mother's Help," the "Mary Jane Series," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE CAMP AT GRAVEL POINT

I

INTRODUCING THE SENIORS

Martha Harding sat down on the steps in front of the gymnasium and looked around the quadrangle. The bright sunshine had a hint of coming spring, though piles of dirty, messy-looking snow showed that winter had not as yet departed.

"The middle of February!" exclaimed Martha in disgust, "and that child still 'crushing' as violently as in October! Whatever is a person to do about it? Guess I'll have to act like a clown and make her sick of me in order to get her to stop."

She poked her hand down into the pocket of her plaid skirt and pulled out some papers. A clipping from the *Grant High News*, notes for ancient history, a summons from the office, a dime, a locker key, and three hairpins she put back into her pocket. That left a torn bit taken from a notebook, which she spread out and regarded disdainfully.

"Makes me sick!" she grunted. "I thought one valentine was enough, and here's a candidate for another."

"Hello, Mart," called a gay voice from the passage at the corner of the gym; "got another?"

"Worse luck!" admitted Martha.

"Your crush notes would make a book," laughed Margy teasingly. "Who's this from?"

"As if you did n't know!" retorted Martha.

"Your little freshman?" laughed Margy.

"Still, yet, and always, apparently," said Martha. "It's poetry now," she added as Margy came over and sat down beside her. "What do you think of that?"

Margy picked up the scrap of paper Martha handed her and read:

Love Insurance

I carry most insurances you 'd think I would require,
Life, accident, tornado, automobile, sickness, and fire;
But I find I need protection 'gainst the thrill that lies
In the glance of the girl who has those lovely, big brown eyes.
If she looks at me — good gracious! It just sets my heart a-whirl!
Is there any real insurance 'gainst the wiles of that one girl?

"Well," said Margy, assuming the judicial manner of her English teacher, "if we scan that carefully in class, I really think we might discover wherein the meter could be improved, but as to subject-matter, it is quite as gushing as the notes received heretofore. What do you think, Miss Harding?"

"On the advice of her attorney, Miss Harding refuses to answer," replied Martha sedately; then she added, "Say, really, Marg, what would you do about it? I'm getting sick of being trailed by freshman girls every minute of the day."

"You should n't be the senior beauty, then," said Margy practically. "With curly golden hair and big brown eyes like you have — what can you expect?"

"Sense!" exclaimed Martha, "a little sense! What do I care if my hair is yellow and my eyes brown? And as for curls — don't I brush it and brush it and brush it till my arm aches? I do think those freshman girls might let me alone for one day!" And she gave a vicious kick at the unoffending bottom step.

"Does ums feel badly 'cause ums is so popular!" teased Nan, a third senior who stepped out of the double doors of the gym just in time

to hear Martha's words. "Well, never mind, honey, most of the time you like it a lot, and if you had straight black hair and eyes of no particular color and were too tall, as I am, you'd think twice before you gave away your hair and eyes."

"Yes, it's too bad about you," retorted Martha, laughing; "with everybody knowing you're the only one who can get 'center' on the school team, you should sit right down and worry about the color of your eyes — you really should. We ought to do something about it, though, girls," insisted Martha. "The way this crush business is all over the school makes me sick. Of course we all like to be popular and to be liked and all that, but —"

"But we can't figure out how to be a popular senior and be happy," finished Nan. "We ought to write to the *Evening News.* We might say, 'We are three seniors at blank high school, and we are so very popular we are miserable. Will you please tell us what to do about it?'"

"Well, it's too deep for me," laughed Margy; "here's where I go to the library. What you people going to do all afternoon?"

"All afternoon?" echoed Nan; "by jin-

goes! Here it is ten of four and I due at the office at three-forty-five for conference."

"You'd better hurry," said Martha, "and I might say the same of myself — I've got to see Miss Voorhes about decorations for the game Friday. See you both later." And the three girls parted for their various appointments.

Grant High School, which Martha Harding and her friends attended, was a large co-educational high school situated near one of the beautiful parks on the south side of Chicago. In the school the students had opportunity not only for study, but for athletics of all sorts, social contacts and activities that kept the girls and boys up and doing every minute of the day.

Naturally most of the students entered in their freshman year, so that, by the time they were seniors, they had become well enough acquainted to make real friendships founded on mutual interests as developed by the school activities.

While it could hardly be said that any one girl was "the most popular in the school" — there were too many kinds and sorts of students attending to have any one type equally

popular with all — still, Martha, with her good looks, kindly manners, and athletic ability, was certainly one of the most noticed and sought-after girls in the school. And at the beginning of her senior year she had been the object of many a freshman "crush." That meant that she was admired, written to, invited around, and generally adored, more than any girl in school.

At first Martha loved the excitement and fun of this freshman adoration; but, perhaps because she was so wholesome-minded naturally, by the holidays it had begun to pall upon her, and with the beginning of the second term she actually tried to figure out how to stop the now tiresome flow of notes, candy, and adoring girls who hung around her locker in the corridor or in the gym. It was one thing to be admired and quite another to have her own classmates perpetually teasing her about her "crush-ettes." She was really determined that something was going to be done to stop it.

Half an hour after the three girls parted to attend to the business of the afternoon, Nan came across Martha in the bulletin-room near the gym.

"Another billet-doux?" she asked as she

saw her friend take an envelope from the rack.

"Wait till I see," replied Martha, and she tore open the envelope.

"I should say it wasn't," she added as she read the note; "listen to this: 'Please come to the office at eight-thirty Wednesday for conference.' Now, what do you suppose that is?"

"Ask me — I don't know!" laughed Nan; "have you been flunking French or spooning in the corridor or any other devilishness, Miss Harding?"

"Not that I know of," said Martha as she regarded the slip with a puzzled frown. "But I saw Miss Darrow not half an hour ago and this message has been put up there since then. I hate mysteries."

"Thought you loved them!" exclaimed Margy, who dashed by just then.

"Oh, I like 'em in a book," admitted Martha, "but I hate 'em in the office. I wish —"

"Oh, girls!" exclaimed Peggy, a pretty, black-haired girl who came into the bulletin-room as Martha was talking, "have you got your notices?"

"Notices!" exclaimed Martha; "notice, you mean! Your humble servant is singled out for a summons if you please."

"Piggy! You're not any such thing!" retorted Peggy. "They were going to send them to each one of us, but Miss Jones was afraid some of you might be gone, so, after posting yours, she happened to catch me in the corridor and told me to get all the R.D. girls and round them up for an 'important conference in Miss Darrow's office at eight-thirty A.M. to-morrow' — what do you think of that?"

The R.D. girls were the members of the senior girls' honor society.

"Now, what do you suppose is up?" exclaimed Margy. "The Valentine party's over and I know everything went O.K. 'cause she said so. Marks aren't out yet, and, anyway, we're not so bad when you come right down to it. Whatever — "

"Mystery," said Nan; "that's what it is, girls. Something new — you just listen to me. I feel it in my bones."

At that minute a girl, younger than the three seniors by two or three years, dashed into the room. Her cheeks were flushed from running and her eyes were shining with happy importance.

"Oh, Martie, dear," she exclaimed, "Miss Voorhes wants you in her office." (Miss

Voorhes was the gym teacher.) "She forgot to tell you that before you go home you must appoint the committees for arrangements for the game Friday — decorating, seating, and all that, you know — that you just conferred about. She's in her office now if you want to talk to her. Was n't she a darling to let little me come and call you?" gushed freshman Polly as she glanced adoringly at Martha.

It was n't hard to guess that Polly was the freshman who was due for a squelching because of her violent crush on Martha! But it was one thing to decide that Polly needed a lesson and quite another thing to give the lesson when eager little Polly was on hand.

"Say, it's a good thing you did get me," said Martha heartily; "I'd have gone home without seeing about those very committees and they ought to be in the *Grant High News* to-morrow so the girls can get to work."

"We lead a busy life," said Margy, giggling; "we've enough on hand to keep a clubful of women busy. Regardez what to-morrow holds — one job of arranging for game; one mystery to be solved; and" — she added this to Nan and Peggy as Martha and adoring Polly walked off toward the gym office — "one

crush to be disposed of. Poor Polly! She 'd be a nice child if she only had some sense! — Well, the mystery will have to wait till to-morrow so far as I 'm concerned, to say nothing of murdering the crush and other important items. This is music-lesson day and I 'm only twenty minutes late now. Good-bye, everybody."

And Margy dashed off leaving Peggy and Nan to puzzle over the possibilities the morning's conference in the office might hold.

II

MISS DARROW'S MYSTERY

LONG before the time for the regular opening of school the next morning, twelve excited senior girls, members of the R.D. honor society, gathered in the girls' locker-room, and, as they stowed away hats, coats, and books in their lockers, plied each other with useless questions about why they were called together.

"I just simply know that she's going to make us bust up this society!" cried Leslie Garrison, an excitable girl who was much overdressed.

"What makes you think that?" asked Martha Harding.

"Well," replied Leslie, glad to have a listener, "yesterday, when Jane was going by the office, she heard Miss Darrow say to Mrs. Comstock that there was 'simply too much' something, she didn't quite hear what, and she 'phoned me last evening about it, and we just simply know that she meant too much of meetings and all that — you know that's her hobby, poor thing, and I'll bet a cooky that

she's going to ask us to disband or something."

"You've got a lot of accurate information, Les," teased Margy. "Why do we bother to go to the meeting when Les knows all about it?"

"Oh, I don't really as you might say *know*," admitted Les, "but you see it looks — "

"Look at the hair!" interrupted Nan. "Peggy! What ever have you done with your hair?"

"Ratted it and put in stuffing," replied Peggy with assumed calmness.

"What'd you use?" asked Les.

"Ask me! I'll never tell," said Peggy. "How d' you like it, girls."

"Peachy!" "Stunning!" "Très bien, old dear!" came the assurances.

"But you do look awfully old and sophisticated, Peggy," said Martha thoughtfully. "Are you sure it's your style?"

"Oh, Martie!" exclaimed Peggy; "do you really think it's so bad as all that?"

"Heavens! No!" laughed Martha; "only —"

"Only each girl ought to know her own style of beauty and her own color scheme and stick to it — haven't you remembered all

Martie's ravings ever since she took Home Ec?" cried Les gayly. "Don't take her seriously — I never do. Anyway, it's time to go to our mystery meeting, ladies!" And, hooking her arm into Peggy's and Martha's, Leslie walked them out of the locker-room and down the corridor toward the office.

There was no one in room 159, the conference room adjoining Miss Darrow's private office, when the R.D. girls arrived. But they had n't long to wait. Miss Darrow was only a minute late, and the way she walked through the door, shutting it carefully behind her and pulling the curtain so no one could look in, made the girls realize that a conference of more than usual importance was to take place.

"Girls," she began, "I am sure that you have been noticing some of the very same things I have observed in the school this year, and that you will all agree with me we ought to do something to stop the growing tendency. Fortunately you girls don't often offend taste in just the way I mean." And here she gave a glance at Peggy and Leslie that puzzled the girls more than ever, for Peggy and Leslie, though awfully good friends, were as unlike as possible; Peggy being demure and a good

student, while Leslie was more or less of a fly-away who was all for clothes and gayety and never in the world would have made R.D. but for her athletic ability.

"And so," continued Miss Darrow, "I am sure I can count on you, each one, as we introduce this new movement into the school." Then she went on and told them the new plans.

More than once, while the Dean of Girls was talking, Peggy put her hand up to her hair, that for the first time in her life was "ratted" and puffed in what was, for her at least, an extreme style. And more than once Leslie, who prided herself on doing as she pleased, and "if folks did n't like it they could go hang for all she cared," pulled her short skirt lower and tucked her high French heels farther under her chair.

But not a word was said as the Dean talked on.

At last she finished and asked the girls what they thought of the new plan.

Nobody answered.

"Of course it does come as a new idea to you girls," she said, as she looked at their thoughtful faces, "and it won't be an easy thing to introduce in the middle of the year. In a way,

it is n't quite a square deal to spring something all of a sudden — something as much of a change as this will be to some girls. But I am sure that, when you think it over carefully, you will agree with me that something must be done and you will come to feel that what I suggest is not too hard. And I know this much," she added with a smile, "if you R.D. girls approve, the whole school will follow."

Still not a word was said, so Miss Darrow added: "Suppose you think it over for a day. Talk it over with your mothers and meet me here in the morning and we'll decide how to go about it. Only one thing you must promise me. You R.D. girls are to think it over and talk it over if you can get by yourselves and if you want to. But not another girl in the school is to know a thing about it — not a hint. I know I can count on your honor to keep it for one whole day and night. Promise me?"

Solemnly twelve heads nodded yes.

"Then that's all for this morning, girls," she said pleasantly, and opened the door just as the warning bell rang for first-hour recitations.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Peggy, as she hurriedly got out into the corridor, "I never

felt so awful in my life! The only morning I ever tried it, and then *this! Did* you ever hear of anything so terrible."

"Awful, *awful,* AWFUL," agreed Margy; "your reputation is ruined forever, me child. It *was* funny, though, Peggy," she admitted sympathetically. "I thought I'd die! Miss Darrow talking along so solemncolly like and you wishing you had your ratting and stuffing anywhere but in that room! Say! I nearly giggled, and if I had, would n't I have got a freezing little glance, though?"

"Well, it's just none of her business!" exclaimed Leslie vigorously. "I'd like to see anybody telling me what to — "

"Hush!" warned Martha, as Polly and her classmate Jane shyly edged their way within hearing; "you know what we promised!"

"Promise nothing!" grumbled Leslie; but she dropped her voice all the same and hurried away from the under-class group so she could talk in safety to Margy who had the same first-hour recitation.

It did n't take much observation to make the under-class girls and the seniors who were not members of R.D. discover that something was under consideration among the R.D. girls,

and by the end of the second period curiosity was running wild over the school. Just that fast does a hint of mystery travel!

Tips, a popular junior, set herself as a committee of one to ferret out the mystery.

"Look here, Leslie Garrison," she announced to her friend as they started up the stairs together for a third-hour Latin recitation, "you need n't try to tell me there's nothing going on like you did last period. I know better. Polly and Jane saw all you R.D. girls coming out of 159, and you all looking as though you'd lost your last friend. Now, 'fess up like a lady and tell what's doing."

"Sorry, Tips, on the square I am," said Leslie sincerely; "but honest to goodness I dare not tell. It gives me the cold shivers to think what might happen if I did! Heavens! Did you ever give Miss Darrow your word of honor and all that? Gee! What would happen to me if the thing got out would fill a book!"

"Well, never mind, Miss Importance," flaunted Tips, "I'll find out, anyway. You R.D. girls make me tired with all your secrets, anyway!"

"Why, Tips Laughlin!" exclaimed Leslie; "you know perfectly well I'd tell if I dared!

And you know we have n't a single secret but just what the letters stand for and some such things that are perfectly fair secrets. But I don't see what you make such a fuss about, anyway," she added as she recalled what they were quarreling over. "You 'll hate it enough when you know about it — why worry a day ahead of time?"

Fortunately the recitation bell stopped further discussion.

At the same time Martha was having a hard time with her freshmen. Polly and Jane having discovered a hint of mystery set themselves to the task of digging it out.

"I'll wager they think they have Sherlock Holmes's mantle on their youthful shoulders," laughed Margy, as she came upon the two of them, teasing and cross-questioning Martha in the locker-room.

"No, I will not tell," Martha was saying firmly; "I will not hint and I will not be teased — so there, Polly Lewis!" And with a feeling that she must flee temptation, Martha flounced off to the library leaving a crushed little Polly behind.

"Did you hear?" cried Polly, the tears streaming down her cheeks; "did you *hear?*

Oh, girls," she confided to a couple of classmates who were grabbing books from their lockers, "I'll never be happy again! Did you hear what Martie said to me?"

"Bunk!" grunted Ruth; "before I'd cry!"

"But you don't know how I adore her!" groaned Polly tragically; "to think that she would say that to me — to me — to me!" And only the last warning bell pulled her to her senses enough to send her weeping to the library, there to spend an hour needed for Math making up verses on "How to die," "My Crushed Spirit," and "Why do you love me not."

Noon that day was the regular weekly meeting of the R.D. girls, and it was with relief that they locked the door of their room and saw that only girls who were in the secret were present.

"Honestly, I'll perish if I have to live through another hour like this morning!" exclaimed Leslie, as she flopped down on the couch and drew out three chocolate creams for comfort.

"*Did* you *ever* have such a time!" agreed Peggy; "how those people ever got wind that something was up is beyond me!"

"I know one thing I'm going to do," declared Martha; "I'm going to stop Polly's crush if I have to leave school! Did you see the way that child wept and wrote 'poetry' to me all last period in library? And Miss Lawrance frowning at me as though I was personally responsible? If that happens again I'll be in such disgrace I never will get out — and just when I need Miss Lawrance's help for reference for my theme!"

"I'll tell you what let's do," said Nan, who had been munching away on her sandwiches. "This deciding whether we like Miss Darrow's plan is all politeness, as you very well know! Awfully nice of her to put it that way and everything, but it's going to be — the office has decided, so why do we worry? And you all know it has its good points — the plan, I mean, not the office, silly!" she added as Margy started to interrupt.

"That's all no news," said Leslie; "what's your idea?"

"This," continued Nan. "Let's vote to support the plan without bothering to wait for evening and another meeting to-morrow. And then we can tell her at her office hour, seventh period, and she can release us from our prom-

ises not to tell, and then everybody will be happy."

"Happy! She think we will ever be happy again!" exclaimed Margy with a tragic roll of her eyes. "With Polly weeping all over the place and Les mourning lost or about-to-be-lost glories, can this world ever again be a happy place! Oh, I'm so glad I happened to bring along my best handkerchief with blue threads and French embroidery to weep in. Little did I suspect that this day my young life would be so clouded."

"Honestly, Marg, you'd make a mole laugh, though science tells me those creatures neither talk nor whisper," said Martha; "do stop a minute and let us think what to do."

"Why think?" said Peggy; "Nan has an idea; is n't that enough for the crowd?"

"All right, then let's do it," said Martha; "and for goodness' sake, girls, do gather up all your papers and crumbs! Did n't my poor house committee clean this place yesterday till it had to be introduced to itself, it was so tidy!"

Waste papers were tumbled into the basket, crumbs were brushed off the couch, and the room set to rights while the girls all talked at once about Nan's suggestion.

"Twelve-twenty-nine!" exclaimed Nan, as she glanced at her watch; "time for warning bell now! Peggy, be a darling and run to the office and get us an appointment for the end of seventh."

"Me!" exclaimed Peggy, "with this hair-do? Never!"

"All right, then," replied Nan, "I'll do it myself! And mind — you're all to meet in her office at the end of seventh — instanter! — and give her the official R.D. O.K. she pines for."

"And release the mystery," added Margy, as the girls hurried out of the door.

III

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF THE MYSTERY

PROMPTLY at three-twenty that same afternoon and in accordance with Nan's appointment for them, the R.D. girls were shown into Miss Darrow's office. Room 159 was in use for a class meeting at the time, so the girls had to crowd around Miss Darrow's desk instead of making themselves comfortable in a bigger room. But who cared about a little standing and crowding when the mystery was to be released? Certainly not those girls!

"We thought we wouldn't wait till morning," said Nan, who seemed to be left to act as spokesman for the group, "because the other girls all suspect that something is afoot, and a secret really is awfully hard to keep around this school — you know that, Miss Darrow."

"I surely do," laughed Miss Darrow sympathetically; "I thought after I left you this morning that perhaps I had given you too hard a task, but you know we think our R.D. girls can do anything."

"I suppose we could, thank you kindly," replied Martha, laughing, "but why waste virtue when we may need it some day?"

"Sensibly said," answered Miss Darrow; she and Martha were the best of friends, and Martha could joke where other girls, not so well acquainted, thought they had to be very formal with their dean. "So what have you decided to tell me?" she added encouragingly.

"We want to support whatever you think best for the school, you know that, Miss Darrow," said Nan, "and we feel sure, if you think this step is needed, you must know best."

"That's what I was sure you would say, girls," replied Miss Darrow with much satisfaction. "Now, Peggy, if you'll take this notice up to the *News* office, it can come out in the morning's issue, and then you girls won't have any more secret to worry about."

"Then do we have to keep it all the rest of the afternoon?" asked Martha, as she thought with dismay of the freshmen who would be quizzing her as soon as she reached the gym.

Miss Darrow thoughtfully tapped her calendar pad as she hesitated a minute.

"No, on the whole, I think it would n't matter a bit if you told," she decided. "Sup-

pose you take the carbon of the notice that goes to the *News*, so if any one asks you about it you can tell it correctly."

She handed a typed notice to Martha, and then, as her telephone rang, she added, "That will be all for to-day, girls," and dismissed them into the hall.

"Let's read it!" cried Leslie, "and see if it sounds as bad as it did this morning."

"Not here!" exclaimed Peggy in dismay; "she might come out and see us. You girls walk slowly while I dash to the *News* office and leave their copy, and then I'll meet you in front of the gym and we can read it together." And off she ran down the corridor.

Slowly the crowd of girls walked down the nearly deserted corridor, through the bulletin-room and over to the gym, and, as they one and all flopped down on the steps, Peggy, breathless, joined them.

"Girls! You'd have died if you had seen Herb!" she exclaimed.

"What'd he say?" demanded Les.

"Not a word!" laughed Peggy, "but he looked a whole dictionary! I said, 'Here's a notice Miss Darrow wants on the front page to-morrow, Herb,' and I laid it down in front

of him. 'Oh, she does, does she?' he said, languid-like as though he owned the whole school, and then he started reading it. 'You don't mean to say you girls are going to let her do all that?' he asked, as soon as he had read a bit; but I ducked. You don't catch 'dis chile' getting quoted as opposed to any new stunts — not while my hair is done as it is now, anyway!"

"Well, come on, let's read it," urged Leslie; "maybe it's not so bad, after all."

"Listen to the hopeful lady," laughed Margy. "Go on and read, Martie; I'm prepared for the worst!" And Margy struck an attitude of defense that would have done credit to a pioneer.

For some time past [read Martha] the office has noted with increasing distress the tendency among our girls to overdress. They seem to be forgetting that girls come to school to get an education — not to make a fashion display. It has been thought advisable, therefore, to take notice of this tendency from the office, and to pleasantly, but firmly, suggest to our students that overdressing will no longer be allowed in school. Girls are asked in particular to note that fancy, jeweled combs and extreme styles of hairdressing are considered bad taste; that silk or satin dresses are not to be worn at school; that sleeves should be worn below the elbow; skirts at a moderate length and at least one and one

half yards around, and that shoes should be those with sensible, low heels. Response to this notice is anticipated on the day after it appears in the *News*, and after that day girls violating the spirit thereof will be considered disorderly students.

Signed S. J. Darrow, Dean of Girls

"I'll say it's Peggy's first, last, and only appearance with fancy puffs on her head," laughed Margy. "To think that this epistle should have come to-day!"

"Last and only is right," groaned Peggy; "here I've been sticking to old styles all year, and now look what I get! On this day of all days, I've the most extreme puffs in the whole school!"

"Oh, you should sit down and worry," said Leslie; "look at my French heels and silk dress, and am I worrying? Just look at me! Girls, are we going to sit tamely by and do nothing about this?"

"But our promise!" Martha reminded her.

"Of course our promise," agreed Leslie, "and of course we have to stick by it, but why not have a little fun on the side? And Miss Darrow did n't say just how far we could go in taking her at her word, you know."

"Talk on, Les," ordered Margy; "something tells me you have an idea."

"Would n't it be a lark — " began Leslie; but, before she could say another word, Tips Laughlin dashed out of the gym.

"For Heaven's sake, girls, where have you been?" she demanded. "Miss Voorhes has been waiting and waiting for you, and if you don't get in there in a hurry, she'll not let us have basket-ball practice to-day — and you very well know we need it!"

"Need it!" exclaimed Martha, "I should say we do! How ever did we forget!" And instantly all thought of dress regulations passed from her mind, and she and the other R.D. girls hurried into the gym lockers to get into clothes and begin practice for the game.

For an hour and a half the team and the subs practiced, and by the time they dressed for going home they were so tired and so full of thoughts about the game that there was neither time nor energy to plan retribution for Miss Darrow.

But the next morning, when Martha arrived at school, the corridor buzzed with excitement. The *Grant High News* was out and the new dress regulations were the only topic of conversation.

"The nerve!" said one voice.

"My mother'll come over and treat her to a lunch she'll be so pleased," said another in a disgusted voice.

"Got your hair up old style, Peggy," teased another as Peggy, her hair done as usual, took off her hat.

"The boys will guy us to death!" groaned Tips; "think what we'd do to them if the office tried to buy their ties. 'Was um nice ums li'l' babies?' That's the line of talk we'd give them, so you can tell just what they'll say to us!"

"We should worry about those boys," replied Margy with a toss of her pretty head; "a lot they've got to do with it! Who cares if they do call us babies, so long as they treat us — still, yet, and always?"

"Who said babies?" demanded Leslie, dashing into the locker-room just then; "I didn't mean babies, I meant little girls."

"Explain yourself, woman," said Margy.

"You know what we started to plan yesterday when we had to stop and practice?" asked Leslie.

"Say, Les," replied Martha, as she picked up the books for her first recitation and followed

Leslie out of the room, "do you think we'd dare do it?"

"*Dare!*" exclaimed Leslie, "of course we would! Now don't be an old fogy and have a conscience. Do let's have a little fun out of it!" And then she explained her plan. On the next day, the first after the new regulations were to be in effect, she proposed that as many girls as possible should come to school in "little girl" dresses — full, plain skirts and middy blouses — and with their hair in two pigtails down their backs. "She *can't* mind," continued Leslie, "'cause our skirts will be more than the width she approves, our sleeves will be long, and our hair the plainest of the plain. Now do come on and do it, girls."

There was n't time to object then, as first-hour recitations were beginning, and by the next intermission all the girls were talking about Leslie's idea and it seemed stupid to hold back. So gradually every one of the leading girls of the school agreed to dress up and have a pigtail day on the morrow.

"They *will* do something," said Martha to Peggy as they ate their lunch together, "and it looks to me as though this would n't be as bad as dolling up against the regulations

would be. Anyway, I hated to appear a 'fraidy. Here's hoping Miss Darrow does n't expel us every one."

"How can she?" asked Margy; "are n't we being the good little girls and doing just what teacher says?"

"You know very well we're not doing any such thing," replied Peggy.

"But, on the other hand, we're not being so very what you might call *bad*," Martha reminded them; "so here's hoping. And I have remembered the very skirt," she added; "it's about three yards 'round and just the length to look awful."

"We'll look beautiful," agreed Margy sarcastically; "I can hardly wait till to-morrow."

They certainly did not look what Margy would have called "beautiful." By eight-fifteen the next morning the corridor looked as though some juvenile home had opened its doors and let all the "queer ones" escape. In fact, so funny and unnatural did the girls look, with their "ear-pads" gone and their pigtails flying, that even best friends had to look twice to make sure who was who.

"Look at Ruth!" giggled Margy, as she glanced around the locker-room; "*how* my

mind is relieved! I have often wondered whether the child really had ears!"

"Look at yourself, miss," Ruth answered; "and if you have ever pined to see a freak, your days of longing are over!"

"Don't turn my head, dearest," laughed Margy; "and *do* look at Les!"

Indeed, Leslie Garrison was worth more than one look — in fact, it might take some folks more than one look to know who she was! Her beautiful auburn hair, that was usually fluffed out in great puffs, was pulled straight back and braided into two braids; her French heels were displaced by low-heeled oxfords; her tight-fitting skirt and thin georgette blouse were gone, and in their place she wore a very full blue serge skirt and a very childish white middy and bright red tie.

"Let me laugh or I die," she cried dramatically, as she ran into the locker-room. "You know dear lady Pertley," she continued, referring to the demure little Latin teacher who had been with the school since its beginning; "she saw me in the corridor just now and I had my hat off, and what do you suppose the old dear said?"

"Go on and tell," urged Ruth.

"She said, 'How sweet you do look, my dear! I'm so glad to see one of our leading girls go back to the sweet styles that we all love.' Oh me, oh my! Me a sweet style of long ago!"

"I only hope they all take it in such a 'sweet' spirit," said Peggy; "for my part, courage fails me."

And if she had known all the day held in store for the pigtail girls, her courage would have failed — even more.

IV

PREPARATIONS FOR THE GAME

All that glitters is not gold; nor is every pigtail, fun — as the girls of Grant High School soon discovered.

The boys teased them unmercifully; pulled their pigtails, asked them when they were going back to grade school, and pretended admiration of the new styles. And as though that was n't hard enough, the teachers did n't at all seem to enter into the spirit of the occasion. Not one teacher followed Miss Pertley's example and admired the modest fashions of the morning — not a single one. Instead it *almost* appeared as though the pigtail girls were singled out for trouble. Ruth had a long problem to do at the board in Math (and she very well knew the pictures that George Dartly was drawing of her back, so she could n't work the problem and got a zero for the day); Martha Harding was called to take Miss Lawrance's place in library for a few minutes, and had to sit up front where she could see the giggles and hear the teasing remarks that were whispered

the minute the librarian's back was turned; and Leslie Garrison, the leading spirit of the day, was called into the gym office to meet the committee from a neighboring school and arrange for another game in the near future.

"With me looking like this!" she groaned at lunch time, "and Miss Voorhes as placid as you please and never giving me a minute to explain that we were having pigtail day to discipline the faculty!"

"Looks to me somebody besides the faculty is being disciplined," admitted Martha, "though, to tell you the truth, I did n't think they were clever enough to do it just this way."

"Clever!" exclaimed Leslie; "I call it horrid! Instead of calling us into the office and giving us a chance to tell them that we were just showing them a thing or two, they act as though we liked it! If you call that clever!"

"I surely do," insisted Martha, "and for a nickel I'd make a dash for Fifty-Fifth Street and get a box of hairpins even at the risk of being late to English. I can't stand having my hair pulled any longer — it's about out now!"

As though in answer to her wish a messenger came to the door of the Girls' Club just then,

and, right before the girls who were eating lunch together, posted a notice on the door.

The girls affected indifference, but the minute he had gone down the stairs, they ran to see what the notice said.

Girls who wish hairpins before the afternoon session may secure same by calling in person at my office.
Signed, S. J. Darrow, Dean of Girls

"I call that neat," said Nan admiringly; "she gets us in one at a time and shows us the error of our ways. I, for one, am going — I want my hair up."

"Easy, easy; look who's an easy mark!" teased Leslie.

"We may be easy," agreed Martha, "but I mean to be comfortable. I'll go with you, Nan."

"Me, too, Pete," called Margy; "what's your rush! Wait till I pick up the crumbs."

"I meant to put mine up, anyway," said Peggy, "and if you don't mind, I'll go along."

"We the conquered damsels come," sang Margy, as the girls ran down the stairs and hurried toward the office.

Miss Darrow was nicer than the girls thought she ought to be. If her eyes twinkled a bit with fun as she passed out hairpins to the

humble seniors, she was gracious enough not to say anything about who the joke was on and she did n't ask for promises or make any criticism. In fact, she was so very kind and pleasant that impulsive Margy could n't keep still and blurted out: "I know you think we are awful, Miss Darrow, after promising to mind the regulations and everything, but truly, we did n't think how our dressing up this way might look. It seemed fun till we got here, and, if you'll excuse us this time, we'll be good forever after."

"A large order, Margy," laughed the Dean pleasantly; "but I was sure that you girls did n't realize how you would look or that you might stir up a bad spirit in the school. However, now that you are appearing with your hair as usual for afternoon — and I am sure you will have regular school dresses on in the morning — I know the other girls will follow your lead and no trouble will come of the day's fun."

And Miss Darrow was right. As soon as word got 'round that the R.D. girls had put their hair back as usual, other heads of hair began to take on a tidy appearance, and the girls' locker-room was crowded with girls who,

without hair-brushes or enough pins, were trying to make their hair look natural and tidy.

"Thank Heaven, this day is over!" exclaimed Peggy as she banged shut the door of her locker late that same afternoon.

"And while you're in a thankful mood," added Martha, "thank Heaven that tomorrow is the game, so this day's troubles will soon be forgotten!"

So pigtail day, with its promise of fun and its tame ending, passed into history, for not even pigtail day could hold school interest when a basket-ball game with Ottowa School was to be played.

Before eight the next morning committees of girls were at school decorating the gym with the colors of the two schools — crimson for Grant High and bright blue and black for Ottowa. The girls all well remembered the gay time they had had when they played the girls of Ottowa at the Ottowa gym the year before; how the girls there sent for them in cars, and were such perfect hostesses, and for days the Grant High girls had been working and planning so that every detail of the afternoon would be quite perfect. To be sure, Ottowa was only another school a couple of

miles away — no distance at all in the big city — but the game was to have all the fun that an out-of-town "visiting team" might have at a college. Committees attended to the decorations, the seating, and the ventilation; groups of girls practiced cheers; and the girls who were lucky enough to be on the teams were watched that they kept training and ate exactly what and when they should.

"Everything is ready now except you have n't given me your list of linesmen, Martha," said Miss Voorhes, as she checked over her list of things to be done.

"Martie, dear," whispered Polly Lewis as she passed by at that minute, "you won't forget that you promised me I could be one?"

Polly was fearfully humble, for since the day in the library she had n't had much chance to see Martha, and she was afraid Martha had n't forgiven her and would take away the promised privilege of being linesman for the game. It was a coveted privilege given to very few freshmen, as Polly well knew.

"'Deed I have n't forgotten, Polly," replied Martha sweetly, and Polly's heart gave a big flop — and the crush was on again, full tilt! "There's the list, Miss Voorhes,"

Martha continued, "Polly and Betty and Adelaide — they all know the game well and I am sure will be careful."

"Did you hear that?" demanded Tips, as the girls gathered in the club for lunch.

"Hear what?" asked Nan.

"No boys allowed in the gym for the game!" exclaimed Tips tragically; "and here all the crowd were coming and going to cheer for our team and it was going to be such fun!"

"Honest, won't they let 'em?" asked Les, her sentence very mixed, but her meaning clear to all the girls.

"Not a one!" repeated Tips. "Makes me tired! I don't want to go to their old game, anyway!"

"Why, Tips Laughlin!" exclaimed Martha; "you don't deserve to be on the team. The very idea of letting a few boys spoil your fun! I guess we'll have enough to do without knowing whether they are there or not."

"Say! I'll bet they'll be there!" laughed Leslie. "I have an idea, ladies. No, I'll not tell," she announced, as she saw she was to be questioned, "so don't tease. I'll tell Bob, and if he can do it you'll find out, and if he can't you'll never know, so there!"

Tips sat on the edge of her chair in her eagerness to think of the plan, but she could n't, so, just after Leslie went, she too hurried out to see if by some hook or crook she could discover what was being planned.

"Now, Margy," said Martha, as she took her friend's arm and walked off toward the next hour recitation, "do keep your head and help me keep mine. I never was so excited about a game in my life — if we only win!"

"We will if you keep on making baskets as you have in practice," said Margy admiringly; "only, honey, do watch your line. You know Miss Voorhes has been telling you that you play over without thinking — and that won't go in a match game."

"I know it," agreed Martha thoughtfully, "and I keep telling and telling myself that same thing. If I make an error — but I won't," she added with a toss of her head; "I'm not going to even think that I possibly could — so there!"

At the end of the seventh period the gym was crowded with girls; every seat was taken and some of the visitors, when they arrived with their gay arm bands and banners of blue and black, had to wait till Grant High girls

who were seated could slip out and let the guests have the front row of chairs.

Cheers followed each other in rapid succession and every girl was tiptoe with excited anticipation.

In the midst of the shouting the girlish voices were downed by a lusty cheer that seemed to come from the back of the gym. Every one turned to look, but not a person was there.

"Where was that?"

"Who's there?" were the questions fired back and forth.

Again the cheer rang out. "Grant High! *Grant High!* GRANT HIGH GIRLS CAN'T BE BEAT!"

And then the secret was out. The boys, debarred from attendance at the game as they had planned, had climbed up on the roof of their own gym and had assembled at the low second-story windows. But for their reckless cheering they might have stood there undetected during the entire game. However, Miss Voorhes, knowing she must follow the ruling of the office, stepped back under the windows and, thanking the boys for their cheers and moral support, invited them to leave.

A round of laughter greeted the heroes as they slid to the ground outside, but there was n't time inside for either pity or laughter. The whistle blew — and the game was on.

V

CONSCIENCE VS. A CRUSH

With a lithe spring Nan knocked the ball toward Martha and the game started with everything looking auspicious for the Grant High team.

"Watch 'em beat those Ottowa girls," whispered Jane, as the ball seemed destined for the basket.

"Yes, watch 'em," quoted Helen scornfully, as a beautiful bit of guarding lost the ball for Grant High and sent the players scurrying down to the other end of the room.

Seeing the team was having its first hint of reverse, "Joe" Bauer, the cheer leader, sprang to her feet and, throwing every bit of energy she had into her voice and gesture, shouted, "Are we downhearted?"

The gym rang with the vigorous answer, "NO!" and she followed that "No!" with a "Seven for the Team!" which the Grant High girls gave with a will.

But two sides can play at the cheering game, as the girls soon discovered. The Ottowa girls

had an energetic little cheer leader who did n't care a rap for the throats of the crowd and kept them cheering most of the time, till the referees had to suggest that regular cheering be kept for intermissions between quarters and halves.

The girls were not sorry for that ruling, for the game was so intense, the players so closely matched, that they were glad of a chance to watch without thinking about cheers.

The first quarter ended without either team scoring. Each had tried brilliant plays, each had done well, but the guards were very good and nothing had succeeded in going through as planned.

"Les," said Captain Nan thoughtfully, as they sat down on the floor for the brief rest between quarters, "you have the chance of your life next quarter. I'll play to you and you *ought* to be too quick for even that speedy little guard — she can't always cover you. Now, for Heaven's sake, watch your chance and make one of your beautiful throws. You know you can do it, honey — now's your chance!"

From the sound of the whistle beginning the second quarter, Leslie watched for her chance

to make a goal. Nan, being quicker than the opposing center, sent the ball to her straight as could be, but some way Leslie could n't quite make a basket. She threw wilder and wilder, getting more and more excited as the game went on.

Little Polly Lewis, at her post as linesman, watched each wild throw of Leslie's with increasing disgust.

"It's a wonder Nan would n't give Martie a better chance," she grumbled to herself. "Martie never gets in the limelight as much as Leslie does, but she's better in a close match. Les loses her head. You bet if Martie gets a chance — "

Others besides Polly seemed to be thinking the same as she did, for the impulsive shouts for Leslie died down as she missed basket after basket and yet covered so much ground that no other girl had as good a chance to play as she did. But while they were so thinking the play took a sudden turn. Leslie lost the ball, an Ottowa player recovered it, and with a beautiful bit of team play the visiting folks had it in the basket before the Grant High girls hardly knew what had happened.

Then the old gym certainly did shake with

the cheers. The Ottowa girls nearly went wild, and the Grant High girls, not to be outdone, made every bit as much noise as their victorious guests.

When the ball went into play again, Nan gave it a twirl toward Martha, and Martha, who was just waiting for a good chance, sent it to Leslie. Leslie, in turn, a bit frightened by the score the other side had made and by the many failures she had been making, worked it back to Martha instead of throwing wild for the basket as she had been doing. This bit of play threw the Ottowa guard off, and Martha made the basket in a very clean-cut throw.

Two baskets in such a short time after nearly two whole quarters without a score were thrilling enough, and the timer's whistle a couple of seconds later sent both teams to the dressing-rooms full of hope and excitement.

The time between halves was to be used for announcements. Miss Voorhes, speaking for Nan, announced the "spread" for the basketball teams which was to be that week-end at Martha's house, and to which all players in any class who had been out for ninety-five per cent of practice were invited; and Betty, speaking for the Girls' Club, announced the

midyear Girls' Club party which was to be in the gym on the next Friday afternoon.

After Betty made the formal announcement, she added: "Each class is to be called on to do a stunt at the party. Something which will take not over fifteen minutes. Plans must be submitted to Miss Darrow for approval not later than Tuesday noon."

"Dear me!" laughed one of the visiting girls; "you people don't have much time to loaf around, do you?"

"Indeed we don't," laughed Polly, who happened to be standing in front of the visitor; "this is a busy old school!"

The announcement of a "stunt party" came as a surprise to the Grant High girls and the air buzzed with questions and answers. "What ever'll we do for our stunt?"

"Now what do you think of that?" exclaimed a junior. "I thought seniors were n't to do anything at that midyear party."

"Oh, they don't," groaned Betty in disgust; "why did n't I say so? The stunts are just for lower-class girls. Would you let it go or shall I make another announcement?"

The question was answered for her by the arrival of the teams from the dressing-rooms

and the whistle for the game. There would be no more time for announcements then, that was sure.

The third quarter began with very careful playing on both sides. Evidently each team was rested enough to have steady nerves and a great determination to play well. But so perfectly were the teams matched that neither was able to score a point.

Halfway through the last quarter, Martha, standing tense and ready for anything, saw the ball come spinning toward her. Toward the side lines a bit too far it went, but, with a reckless reaching-out, she grabbed it — not noticing at all how far she had had to run to get it — steadied herself, and with a beautiful throw sent it deftly into the basket. A throw like that, from so far at the side, sent the rooters cheering wildly and quite overwhelmed the shout of Polly, linesman, who, at the top of her lungs and as soon as she could speak, shouted, "Foul!" Martha, alas, as she so often did, had forgotten the existence of side lines, and, in her eagerness to catch the ball, had stepped one foot out of bounds as she caught the ball. Polly's cry of "Foul!" was uttered before the basket was made and in ample time for the

crowd to hear, it would have seemed; but the girls were so wildly excited that they had n't noticed.

And what in the world should Polly do? Should she insist on being heard — call a foul that had n't been noticed, and doubtless earn the dislike of the girl she adored above all other friends? Or should she keep still and hope to goodness that nobody had seen the foul or heard her call it out? A pretty hard problem for a freshman who was in the throes of the worst "crush" in the history of the school!

As a matter of fact, Polly did n't hesitate nearly so long as it takes to read about it. All the pros and cons flashed through her head like a rapidly run movie, and then, putting her arm up, she ran to the referee and cried, "Grant High forward stepped out of bounds in catching that ball and I called a foul before the ball made the basket!"

Poor little Polly Lewis! It is one thing to decide quickly to be honest, and quite another to have the job done before everybody and to be perfectly sure that scores of girls wish you were anywhere but where you are! If the floor would only have opened up and let Polly disappear into kindly oblivion, she would have

been perfectly happy. Little did she guess what was coming!

Martha, in the center of a circle of admiring girls, heard what was said. Quick as a flash she whirled around and called toward Polly and the referee, "What's that you say, Polly?"

But Polly could n't speak.

"She says you stepped out of bounds and that she called a foul before the ball reached the basket," repeated the referee.

"And she's right," confirmed the umpire from down the field; "I saw the play myself."

"Then the ball goes back to Ottowa and that play does not count," ruled the referee.

Martha ran over to Polly and patted her on the shoulder. "Don't you get downhearted over a little thing like that," she said bravely; "serves me right for being so careless! You watch the line, old top, and I'll watch the ball, and — "

But the rest of her sentence was drowned in the "Are we downhearted" cheer of the Grant High girls.

They say that opportunity never comes twice. But sometimes even proverbs are wrong. Martha played her best, and, as the seconds flew by and the end of the last quarter

came nearer and nearer, she feared that the chance she had lost was to be her only chance. And then, just when she had about given up hope, the ball came into her hand; her guard jumped between her and the basket, but Martha was too quick. Another of Martha's quick, careful throws and the ball dropped neatly into the basket — and the game was won.

"But say, girls, I'm not your hero-*ine*," laughed Martha modestly, when the girls nearly mobbed her after the last whistle blew; "somebody go and talk to that poor little freshman of mine — was n't that peachy of Polly to have the nerve to call a foul on me, though? That child has the making of a real person in her if she'd only be a friend instead of being a crush-ette."

So Polly came in for her share of glory and for something else too — something that she did n't find out about till many days had passed.

VI

CURING POLLY

Past events may be ever so exciting, but they cannot compare with events that are to be. Until the day of the game, winning the game with Ottowa seemed the most important thing in the school. Oh, of course the dress regulations were fairly thrilling, but not like the game; but the minute the game was over and the cheering girls were dashing off to the locker-room for books and wraps, the talk began to center around the basket-ball spread the following evening.

"No, you 're not to bring a cake too," Nan assured Polly; "you bring salad, a big bowlful, and that's enough. Adelaide and Ruth are bringing cake and Martha and Leslie and Peggy and Margy are going to meet at Martha's in the afternoon and make the sandwiches, and the others are bringing fruit and pickles; and — oh, I forget, a lot of good things. There 'll be enough; you don't need to worry about that!"

So Polly did n't worry at all — though if she

could have heard the talk at the kitchen table the next afternoon, when the four girls sat making sandwiches, she might have thought she had considerable to worry about.

At a center table in the Hardings's sunny kitchen the four girls were making sandwiches for the spread. Nan had cut all the bread, Martha creamed the butter and beat the salad dressing, while Peggy and Margy chopped nuts, ground ham and boiled eggs, and mixed cottage cheese and ground peppers.

"Now, then," said Martha, as she inspected Nan's neat piles of cut bread and the various kinds of fillings in bowls on the table, "that's the end of the head work; all we have left to do now is spreading and cutting the sandwiches; so we can talk all we like without being afraid of doing damage."

"Then let's decide what to do about Polly," said Nan.

"What's the matter with Polly?" asked Peggy; "I think she's a nice child."

"So do we all," agreed Martha, "and she's a good player and ought to make the school team next year; and she's bright enough when she wants to be, and all that. But just look at that! It came about an hour before you girls

came." Martha stepped to the dining-room and brought back a huge box of beautiful candy — candy that was as good to look at as it was to eat — so Martha and Nan and Helen could testify, for they had come early and had been given a treat before the sandwich-making fest began.

"Yes, go ahead and take some," invited Martha; "but while you're eating, listen to this, and if it does n't spoil your appetite I'll throw my best hat in the lake."

From under the frill of paper lace at the side of the box, Martha drew out a folded bit of paper and, opening it, she read the following note:

Martie, darling, I know I should n't dare write to you after yesterday, but, dear one, I must tell you of the struggle that was in my heart that one awful moment. Did you ever have a struggle of your own and have your heart torn in twain by your honor and your desire? Of course you have not, for your honor and your desire would always be one. But it is different with little me, for I am not as perfect as you are, darling, though I try and try to be more like you every day. At first, when I saw you step over that line, I thought I could n't say a word to you and then I thought I must. And then, when I saw that you had made a basket — had scored — you, Martie, darling, just as I knew you *would* — I was so happy I could n't speak; and then came that

awful haunting DUTY that told me I was a linesman and had to tell — Oh, Martie, darling, could you ever forgive me? Of course you will and maybe you have, for you were very, VERY GOOD to me yesterday after the game, but I should think you would be saying to yourself, "Why could n't she keep still? Why could n't she keep still?" just that way— all the time. And so I want you to know that I love you just as much — no, a thousand times more than ever — and please do eat this candy for me, and I have all your favorite kinds because I have written them down in a book when you have told me what they were. And I do hope that, as you eat, your dear, sweet, true, pure, sincere, simple nature will tell you that I only did it because I had to, and that I love you for always, and never in the wide, wide world would have caused your noble heart a pang if I could help it. Your devoted

POLLY

"Ugh!" groaned Nan, "pass the vinegar! I need something to balance that sweetness!

"Would n't that make you sick now?" questioned Martha. "How she ever gets that way I don't see. To look at her she seems like a sensible child, but there's no sense in *that* letter, I know that!"

"She'll murder you for showing it to us," laughed Peggy.

"No, she won't," said Martha firmly, "because she'll never know. You're not to say or hint a word that will make her guess,

now, Peggy, so you be careful! I would n't have shown you such a silly crush note — you know I never have — only I am so sick of them that I thought maybe, if you really saw how she writes, you might be able to help think up something to cure her."

For a minute or two there was an unusual stillness as each girl made sandwiches in thoughtful silence, and then, suddenly, Margy exclaimed, "Girls! I've an idea!" and bending over the table she whispered a half-dozen sentences.

"Margy! You smart thing! Of course!" exclaimed Martha; but at that minute the doorbell rang and the first group of girls for the spread arrived. The sandwiches, now all made, were hastily wrapped in tea-towels till needed, aprons were tossed to the nearest chair, and the seniors rushed in to greet the newcomers.

After the spread with all its goodies was disposed of, the girls of the basket-ball teams began wondering what they should do for fun.

"Let's write consequences," suggested one.

"Too stale," responded another.

"Let's dance," suggested Helen; "got any new records, Martha?"

"No, let's not dance yet," interrupted

Margy innocently; "let's do some charades."

"Of all stale things — " said Tips.

"Yes, let's," agreed Peggy; "I know a dandy."

"Then you be captain of one side and Margy take the other and choose sides," said Martha, so quickly that no one could voice a word of objection.

And before the girls had time to guess they were being railroaded into a game for some purpose, the groups were in different rooms and the fun had begun.

For two times around the four seniors let the ordinary charades go through, night-in-gale, curriculum and the like; then Margy, with a whispered "Now don't you dare help them guess," to Peggy, whom she passed on the way out of the room, took her forces into the bedroom for the real purpose of the game.

"Let's act some proper names," she suggested, "like Peggy Gregory, or — "

"I'd like to see you act that," scoffed Ruth.

"Well," admitted Margy, "that might be hard, but how about Polly Lewis?"

"Pol — that would be a parrot," suggested Nan, slowly, as though she was testing the word in her mind.

"And 'ly' could be to lie down," added Leslie, looking anywhere but at Margy, she was so afraid she might giggle and give the game away.

"But how could we ever act 'Lewis'?" asked Helen despairingly.

"Easy enough," exclaimed Margy with a sudden inspiration. "You know Lewis Darington?"

The girls all giggled! What girl didn't know Lewis? With his sober face, his colorless ways, his conviction that no boy in the school was so utterly irresistible as Lewis Darington, he had been the laughing-stock of the school all year, and doubtless he was the only one who didn't guess how very funny he was.

"Well," continued Margy, "you girls have sometimes said I could act. I'll act Lewis and see what happens."

In a gale of laughter the girls scurried around for feathers and bright shawls for the poll-parrot and a coat and cap for Margy.

Nan was announcer. She stepped to the living-room and announced to the other side: "This time we are doing a proper name of — four syllables. Two proper names used together it really is, with two syllables to each name. We will act the first two syllables separately and the last two together."

"And," interrupted Margy, from behind, "and then we'll do the whole four together in a last act."

This had n't been planned, but there was no time for dispute, for Ruth, very much bedecked in an old red shawl draped over her, and three green feathers in her hair, came from the bedroom and mincingly paraded up and down before the audience.

"Looks like a parrot, but she'd murder me if she heard me say so," giggled one girl.

Ruth heard, of course, and, turning, made a funny little face at her critic, and then fled to the shelter of the bedroom as the two girls who were to do the hospital stunt with a patient ordered to "*lie* down" as the chief point of the story, came out.

By the end of that second act the audience was thoroughly puzzled, and then came Margy. She could always make the girls laugh when she wanted to, and she was at her very funniest in this stunt. She had n't walked twice across the room, saying, as she glanced toward Jane in the audience, "Jane, *why won't* you speak to me this morning?" before every girl was shouting, "Lewis Darington!"

"Oh, would the power the gift but gie us,"

laughed Peggy from her post at the bedroom door; "wouldn't you *adore* to have Lewis see her do it!"

"Don't speak to me!" cried Nan as she wiped the tears from her eyes — and indeed every girl there was laughing so she nearly wept at Margy's comical acting.

Finally Margy pranced off to the dressing-room and silence settled over the living-room.

"That was funny as a crutch," admitted Jane finally, "but I don't see a bit of sense to the whole thing."

"Just wait," said Polly, little guessing what was coming; "they said they were going to act the whole thing in one act, don't you remember? Let's wait and see."

"Let's remember what we have thought of so far," suggested Tips as signs of action came from the dressing-room, "I'm sure that first was something about a Poll parrot and the last must be Lewis —"

And just then, Margy, dressed this time in the poll-parrot finery, pranced dignifiedly before them. Around her foot was tied a long string which Nan held, and, with a great show of acting out a tender interest in her pet, Nan led her "bird" back and forth. That in itself

was funny enough, but when Nan, striking an attitude in the middle of the stage, said, "Polly want a cracker?" the girls thought they had never seen anything quite so funny.

Margy waited until the laughter subsided somewhat, and then, in a very mincing voice, she shouted out, "No! Polly want a Martie!" And the secret was out.

"Polly Lewis!" exclaimed the audience in almost one breath, "Polly Lewis!"

Poor little Polly turned all colors and had to endure teasing for the rest of the evening.

"But that certainly was the best charade I ever saw," giggled Peggy as the charade end of the party broke up and the floor was cleared for dancing. "If she isn't cured *now*—well, I'll simply give up!"

"Cured!" exclaimed Martha as she took a pile of rugs to the hall so as to have a chance for a whispered word with Peggy; "she'd better be! Honestly, Peggy, I did feel sorry for her when I saw she knew, but she ought to thank us when she knows it's for her own good."

"Don't worry," said Margy comfortingly, as she and Nan danced around the corner, "she'll be cured now."

But they little knew Polly.

VII

THE STUNT PARTY

"I WISH we could think up something better than was ever given in this old school!" exclaimed Tips Laughlin as she and Ruth were going down the corridor the next Monday morning. "I know perfectly well that those seniors have something good, because, when that crowd tries, they certainly can turn out good stuff."

"Oh, what's the use of worrying our heads about a stunt party," replied Ruth, "we've got troubles — and fun — enough. Come on," she added as they reached the door of the bulletin-room, "I'm going to see if I've any new notes."

"Well, you have n't, darling," said Tips as she hastily scanned the bulletin-board. "Martha Harding has all the mail to-day. Now look at that! From the office and from—do you mean to tell me that *that* is Polly's writing?" She pointed dramatically toward a fat letter sealed tightly and perched under the "H" part of the bulletin-board where all who passed

could plainly see the address, "Martha Harding." "If that child is n't cured after all the guying she got the other day, she's hopeless."

"She needs a new interest in life — that's what Polly needs, me child," laughed Ruth, little guessing how soon a new interest was coming into the whole group and to devoted Polly in particular.

"Oh, Martie," she added as, swinging around and hurrying back into the corridor, they bumped into Martha herself, "you should visit the bulletin-board often — it groans under the weight of your letters."

"Groans, nothing," scoffed Martha. "Why, I *have* two letters, have n't I?" she added as she, too, spied her mail. Hastily grabbing Polly's letter, she stuck it into her notebook for private reading — Martha was really getting sensitive from all the teasing about Polly's crush — but the letter from the office she opened and read at once.

"Break it to us gently," encouraged Tips; "are you fired from school or merely given a pink slip for the day's grind?"

"Now I call that very nice," said Martha in a pleased voice, for, entirely discarding Tips's teasing she had read her note straight

through. "Listen, girls, to what Miss Darrow writes:

> A new girl has entered school to-day, and you can guess how hard it will be for her with new work and no friends. I will appreciate it greatly if you will try to make her feel at home. Her name is Jacqueline Palmer. If you can come to my office at the end of the third period, I will be glad to introduce you two.
>
> S. J. Darrow

I call that very thoughtful of Miss Darrow," continued Martha approvingly, "and I'll be there to meet Jacqueline."

"Bring her up to the Girls' Club for lunch, then," suggested Ruth, "so she can begin getting acquainted at once. And, Martie," she added coaxingly as Martha hurried off down the hall, "be a good fellow and give us an idea for our stunt."

"Good fellow, nothing!" laughed Martha over her shoulder, "get your own idea! Think this is an asylum for the mentally enfeebled? Use your own brain, sweetheart! I have troubles of my own!"

That was a bit of an exaggeration, to be sure; Martha had very few troubles, for a girl who is both good to look at and clever need not have many troubles — provided, of course, that she is also kind and friendly. But Martha did have

much to think about. There was the stunt party for one thing and the senior girls had decided to outdo themselves on every occasion this, their last year in school. Then there was Polly. Martha touched the letter in her notebook and then decided to wait till later to read it.

"One thing at a time is enough," she said to herself. "I'm going to the library where I can sit still and think, and if I can't get up some sort of a stunt in an hour's time I deserve to go to the foot of the class!"

Slipping into the library, she found a seat near the reference table, and, with pencil and paper ready, she waited for the Muse to work. But Muses are often fickle, and Martha waited till she was fidgety and still had not an idea in her head. "We might do a pantomime of a Wild West show — but that's so stale. We might have a country school with the teachers parodied for pupils — but that's risky. Somebody would be sure to overdo the part and then there'd be trouble. We might —" and there she stopped.

A hushed "Hiss" from behind her told her that Polly was near at hand and wanted her attention.

"I will *not* look," she said firmly to herself, and to make doubly sure that she did not turn her head, she looked fixedly at a pile of magazines on the table in front of her. And in a second an idea, full grown and splendid, came into her mind. Why not act a magazine? Gripping her pencil, she scribbled line after line, setting down in black and white every detail of the wonderful idea before it had a chance to take flight.

Then — for she had senior privileges and didn't have to wait for the end of a period to leave the library — she went down to get Miss Darrow's approval.

"I'm going to find out if it's all right before I say a word to anybody," she thought, "and then, if it goes at all, we can get right at it."

Miss Darrow not only approved, but was enthusiastic in her praise. "Honestly, that's the best stunt that has ever been thought of at this school, Martha," she said cordially. "I'll give you Miss Shaw for faculty adviser for it — you know she has a fine sense of humor and will love doing it."

Just then the bell rang and Miss Darrow added, "Wait a minute, Martha; I think we can catch Jacqueline now and then you won't have to come back later to meet her."

A stranger, dressed becomingly in a green-and-black sport skirt and green coat which set off her light brown hair, passed by the office door at that minute and turned at Miss Darrow's call.

"Jacqueline," said the Dean, "this is Martha Harding I told you I wanted you to meet. I am sure she will see that you feel at home and that you meet some of the girls right away."

"Come up to the Girls' Club and eat your lunch," invited Martha; "you'll like them a lot. And I venture to say"—and here Martha turned toward Miss Darrow—"that it won't be two days till some of the girls are calling her 'Jack'—we're apt to use nicknames here," she added with a bit of apology.

"I'd like that," answered the new girl happily, "because that was what they all called me at home."

"Perhaps she can help you with your new stunt, Martha," suggested Miss Darrow. "She isn't sure about all her credits, yet, but there would be no objection to her playing around with you senior girls for this first week."

In the lunch-room that noon there was a decided sensation when Martha and Jacqueline

arrived. It wasn't every day that a girl so pretty and so very friendly appearing came to school. And as though meeting Jacqueline and passing her around among the girls assembled wasn't enough, there was Martha's idea for the stunt to talk of too!

"Martha Harding!" exclaimed Joe when Martha announced that they might act a magazine for their stunt, "if you don't think of the craziest things! Act a magazine! Who ever heard of the like? How we going to do it?"

"Let George do it," interposed Tips; "did you know, girls, that that boy devours — yes, he literally *devours Judge* when he goes back and forth on the L every day!"

"Well, I wondered where he got all those so-called funny jokes he offers as original for the *Grant High News*," said Nan promptly; "now I see it all."

"Who cares about George, anyway!" interrupted Joe; "nobody but Tips! Go on with the big idea, Martie."

"Acting a magazine would be as easy as anything," continued Martha, thus encouraged. "We could have a tableau for the cover —"

"That would have to be you," said Nan.

"I'll loan you my new feather hat," offered

Peggy. "Can't you just see Martie with her goldy hair and brown eyes — and my hat?"

"Shut up!" laughed Martha; "let me finish. Then we could have some ads — tableaux, you know, and each one of you could think up one and have as many girls as possible in the thing, because we all love to dress up."

"Me for dressing up," agreed Tips.

"TIPS LAUGHLIN!" screamed Peggy suddenly and so vigorously that the girls all jumped. "Girls! This is a senior stunt and that impudent junior sitting right here taking it all in."

"And we never thought!" exclaimed Nan. "Now, look here, Tips, you've got to promise not to tell, not to hint, not to *breathe* all this long week! And for goodness' sake get out now before you hear any more!"

"Since you so cordially urge me to stay," laughed Tips, "I will admit that I had an engagement in the hall, so, fare thee well, ladies all. Never worry, girls, I'll not tell your old secrets!" And she hurried out.

"Now, *are* we all seniors?" asked Martha as she shut the door and stood against it. "Miss Darrow said Jacqueline might be with us this week, so that is all right."

"Where's Marg?" asked Peggy.

A pounding at the door settled that question, and Margy was let into the inner circle and the plan further unfolded.

"Then, after some ads," said Martha, "we could act out some foolish story in pantomime. I've got one written out here, but we may improve on it as we act it out. There ought to be a great big heroine — "

"That's Nan," interrupted Peggy.

Martha nodded and continued, "And a small hero so he will look simply silly. Then a villain — "

"Me to be the villain," suggested Margy.

"And a vamp," added Martha; "I thought you could qualify for that part."

"Meow, meow," mocked Margy; "listen to the pretty little kitty-cat!"

"And then the heroine will love the villain and be rescued by the hero, who never once is impressed with the vamp, but is true to his first love. And then she — I mean the heroine, of course — will finally turn back to him and the story will close with a touching fade-out, movie-fashion."

"And make it very touching if it is to be movie-fashion," suggested Joe.

"Then we can have some tableaux of fashions and some more ads and — that's all."

"Honestly, Martie," said Nan approvingly, "that's the cleverest idea! You certainly are one bright lady to think of it all."

"Let's get busy and assign parts and work it out while we have time," suggested practical Peggy. "Margy, you take the ads and Nan take the fashions, and, Martie, you take the play."

"And where do you come in?" asked Margy.

"I, oh, I'll be stage director," offered Peggy, "and property man, and any old thing you like."

And so the fun began. If Jacqueline had had any fear of feeling lonesome in the new school, she lost it that first noon. For all the bustle and fun of that lunch-hour showed her that girls who did things, girls who were active and happy, were the kind of girls she was meeting at the new school. And it was n't two days till she was being called "Jack," was loaning her best hat for the tableau, and volunteering to help make up Ellen who was to be the negro chef in the Cream of Wheat "ad" on Friday.

VIII

JACQUELINE'S SUGGESTION

THERE were no idle hours at Grant High that week. With all the rehearsals and conferences for the stunt party on Friday and the monthly exams — which, of course, had to come the same week — every girl had her hands full to overflowing, and many a lunch was entirely forgotten or swallowed in a gulp so that every minute of the crowded noon hour could be used.

"I'll declare," exclaimed Martha as she and Jack and Nan hurried away from the final rehearsal Friday noon, "if this week ever gets through, and if ever again I have a chance to sit down and eat my whole lunch at one sitting, I won't know how to act!"

"Cheer up," comforted Nan; "the stunt is going to be so good that it's worth all the work and bother; and that third hour affair was the last exam of the week — that's something to be thankful for, anyway."

That afternoon, at the close of school, the gym was crowded. The fame of the Grant High stunt parties was considerable, and

mothers and teachers as well as the girl students came to enjoy the fun. Boys, alas, could not be allowed, as the gym would barely hold the girls and leave room for the "stage" and the dressing-rooms which were set off by folding screens. If the truth were told, perhaps the boys were n't missed as much as they fondly hoped they were, for the girls all had their minds full of the plans for the afternoon.

The junior stunt came first, for the seniors, who were the first to complete their plans, had the choice and asked for last. The poor juniors, on the other hand, had n't decided their stunt until Thursday noon and had to take the only place on the programme not taken — the undesired beginning. Their stunt was mostly impromptu, for there had been time for neither rehearsals nor very much planning; but even the mistakes were funny and the audience giggled delightedly at both the planned and the unexpected fun. The juniors acted out a country school which, presumably, was attended by all the faculty in its childhood, the very stunt Martha had thought of and discarded as too risky to be comfortable. Miss Darrow was tall, awkward "Susie," who giggled without excuse (Miss Darrow's pet

aversion was giggling!) and who never knew where to put her feet. Miss Voorhes, the pretty, dainty gym teacher, who was marked for her New England dignity, had two rather remarkable braids that stuck out primly from just back of her ears and gave an almost grotesque look to Helen's pretty face. This prim damsel would have nothing to do with the whispered friendships of her seatmates, and scorned offers of gum and peppermints with such lofty scorn that the audience was threatened with hysterics!

But the "hero" of the afternoon was Tips Laughlin, who, carefully disguising her slender figure with four great pillows, acted the cheerful part of the jolly music teacher, nicknamed Cewpie, in a way that "brought down the house."

Joe Bauer led some practice cheers while the scenery from the schoolroom needed by the juniors was cleared away, and then the room was invaded by sophs — almost every girl in the class was in the stunt — who, dressed as gypsies, went among the audience and told fortunes. This proved a popular stunt, because every girl loves to hear a fortune and as the sophs had been careful to read

up on good fortunes, only, they had pleasant futures to offer their admiring friends.

The freshmen, who had been teased the whole year about their juvenile looks, took the subject by the horns, as it were, and had a baby party. A dozen of their liveliest members were dressed in cunning smocks of Oliver Twist coats and socks and sandals and were brought to the "party" by doting "mammas."

"Pretty good," laughed Tips as the tiniest freshman of all started crying, "I want to go home to my mamma!" at the top of her lungs. "I did n't know they had the nerve after the way we've teased them all year about being youngsters." And the proud freshmen had the fun of dropping their curtain to a round of hearty applause.

"But what in the world is there left for the seniors to do?" exclaimed a sophomore when the freshman stunt was over. "I can't see what there is left better than what we've had, — yet everybody is talking about the senior stunt being the best ever."

"You just wait and see," promised Tips, who, if the truth be told, had been having a hard time the last day or so keeping secret all she knew about the senior stunt.

Fortunately there was n't long to wait. A dainty girl, dressed in a quaint costume of olden times, appeared in front of the improvised curtain and announced that a living magazine would be given by the seniors. Instantly the curtain dropped and there stood Martha — as pretty a picture as ever graced the front of any magazine. Her costume and pose copied the latest attractive cover on the *Saturday Evening Post*, and brought a round of applause that would have delighted the artist could he have heard it.

Next came three tableaux of ads — one for breakfast food, one for a shampoo, and one for hosiery; and while these pictures were being shown the dainty little announcer held up a huge sign which read — "Please patronize our advertisers!" Then the "story" of the magazine, a thrilling tale of love and tragedy and detectives and vamps and true lovers, was acted out in pantomime to the vast delight of the audience and satisfaction of the hard-working actors. A page of fashions, represented by four girls who wore four charming frocks brought home from Paris only the month before by Flo's mother, was so popular that it had two encores. Four more ads, the

last one being, "It's time to retire," closed the magazine, and the whole audience burst into delighted applause. The senior stunt was voted the best, and the girls were given a lot of congratulation and approval that well repaid them for their hard work.

It was a lucky thing for Jacqueline Palmer that she arrived in the school the very week of the stunt party, for in the fun of plans and rehearsals she got a quick acquaintance with the girls that, under other circumstances, would n't have come so easily. She was much disappointed the first of the next week to find that she could n't be a senior after all — she had learned to like the senior girls so well that she wanted them for her very own classmates.

"Never you mind," comforted Martha when Jacqueline told her the decision of the office, "the juniors are just as fine girls as you'll find anywhere. And, really, you're lucky, you know, for you won't have to leave school so soon. Why, from now till June is no time at all to spend in Grant High! I'm at the end of four years, and, though I'll admit I'm crazy to get to college, I'm also sorry as can be to leave Grant High."

"Who's leaving?" asked Margy, who came

around the corner by the gym just in time to hear the tale-end of Martha's sentence; "not you, are you, Jack?"

"Not I!" laughed Jack. "Martha's just comforting me because I can't leave it when she does."

"Look here, now, Miss Palmer," began Margy with mock seriousness, "we all know Martie's charm and all that, but the old school will really exist without her, and don't you start any crush business — leave that for freshmen!"

"Crush?" repeated Jacqueline with a puzzled laugh; "do tell me what a crush is? I hear about them all the time here."

"For your information," said Peggy, who joined the group just then, "a crush is a violent attack of heroine worship — painful to everybody but the worshiper. And if you want an illustration look at exhibit A — Polly and her crush for Martie. We tried to cure it, but we can't. A crush like that is a real one and, I fear me, goes on forever!"

"Tell her," suggested Nan, "about the charade we thought would cure her." And Margy told all the fun they had acting out the charade they were so sure would cure Polly.

"Well, did n't it?" asked Jack.

"Not one degree!" sighed Martha. "Look at this!" She pulled from her pocket a fat letter — "The fourth in three days!" she groaned and sighed as she began to read, "I will not let the cheap teasing of unappreciative girls change me from the joy of your living and make me feel any less love for your dear, sweet, gentle, tremendous, sincere, beautiful self. So long as you—" She stopped suddenly and crumpled the letter into her pocket, "What's the use of reading it? The most inane slush I ever heard!"

"That child needs a new interest in life," said Peggy, repeating exactly the words Ruth had used some days before.

"Easy enough to say," replied Martha, "but what shall it be?"

"I know!" exclaimed Jacqueline, sitting up with sudden enthusiasm; "she ought to be a Scout."

"A what?" asked Peggy.

"A Scout," repeated Jacqueline, "a Girl Scout."

"What's that?" asked Martha.

Jacqueline stared at them unbelievingly.

"Do you girls mean to say that you don't

know what Girl Scouts are?" she demanded.

"That's what we seem to be admitting," agreed Peggy. "I've heard of Boy Scouts, but I did n't know there were such things as Girl Scouts — are they the same?"

"As much as boys are like girls," said Jack; "I mean, Girl Scouts are for girls what Boy Scouts are for boys. And, oh, girls, if you don't know about Girl Scouts, you certainly have missed a pile of fun."

"Are you one?" asked Margy with interest.

"Yes, and proud to be," said Jack heartily.

"Well, then," suggested Peggy, "tell us about it."

The girls sat down on the steps in front of the gym and Jacqueline began.

"Girl Scouts are groups of girls who join together for work and for fun and who belong to a national organization."

"Sort of a club?" asked Nan.

"Well, maybe," replied Jack doubtfully, "only we don't think of it that way. It really is n't like anything else, girls, because the drills and fun and work and everything are all so mixed up together and it's all such fun that it's more than any club ever thought of being. We have tests and learn to cook and sew

and take care of babies and drill and make uniforms — "

"You mean you have done all that?" interrupted Martha.

"Not all of it," said Jack modestly, "but I'm getting there. And I have missed it so much up here."

"Are n't there any Girl Scouts in Chicago?" asked Peggy.

"Indeed there are," laughed Jack, "but I have n't met them yet. Only yesterday I telephoned to the Scout Headquarters here — "

"How did you know where it was?" asked Nan.

"Found it in the telephone book," replied Jack, "and I asked where the nearest troop belonged."

"What's a troop?" asked Nan.

"It's one of the groups — did n't I tell you that?" asked Jack. "You see they don't call them clubs, because the whole thing is sort of different from ordinary clubs; they call each organization a troop and each troop has a number. At the office they told me that Troop Seventeen meets on Fifty-First Street, but quite a way west. All the same I'm going over

Friday to visit, I'm just that homesick to see some Scouts."

"Girls!" exclaimed Margy, sitting up suddenly, "let's all go along and visit."

"May we, Jack?" asked Martha.

"Surely," said Jacqueline heartily. "I know they'll love to have you, and really, girls, you can't tell a thing about Girl Scouts till you visit a meeting."

"Well, you'd better telephone to your troop that you're bringing us along," suggested Martha practically, "so they can be warned before such a mob descends upon them. How many of us want to go?"

"I'm going," said Nan.

"So'm I," said Peggy.

"Count me in," said Margy.

"And then Martie and me," added Jack; "that's only five — why, we used to have that many visitors often; but where shall we meet?"

"Let's go right after school so's not to lose any time," suggested Martha.

"Yes, let's," agreed Jack; "and I'll bring the address and you girls can tell me the easiest way to go. Miss Neff said it would n't take long on the car and we'll want to get off

on time because the meeting begins at four — promptly."

And in their excitement about going, they not one of them gave a thought to Polly — who really was the one they were going for!

IX

FIRST GLIMPSES OF SCOUTING

IMMEDIATELY after the close of the last recitation period the following Friday afternoon, five excited girls rushed into the locker-room, grabbed books and wraps, and made a quick dash for the door.

"I suppose we really by rights did n't have to rush so," suggested Nan as they dropped into a leisurely pace when they found themselves out on the street, "but I was so afraid some committee or other or somebody or something would make us late that I knew we ought to rush till we got safely away."

"Well, we have n't any too much time," Jack reminded her. "You know you said it would take at least twenty-five minutes to get there by the time we go over to Cottage Grove and transfer and we ought to be there a few minutes before four to meet the captain."

"Honestly I never *was* so excited!" exclaimed Margy. "To think I've lived in Chicago all my life, and here Jack, who has n't

lived here a month, is taking me to see something new — I can't believe it!"

"The unusualness of it is what thrills me," said Peggy; "I feel as though I must be my brother. I always did want to belong to something with a uniform, but girls' things are always so — well, otherwise, you know. Maybe I'll be a captain yet, who knows?"

"You can be a lieutenant after you're eighteen if you want to," Jacqueline reminded her; "I'm going to be when I'm old enough! We had the *dearest* lieutenant in our troop at home! As pretty as a picture and so *very* smart! I just adored to hear her drill and call out, 'Fo-o-u-u-r-r-s RIGHT!' So drawly that way and then sudden — we could n't help but drill well with her for a leader, so no wonder we stood high among all the troops in town."

As the girls went into the parish house where Troop Seventeen was meeting, not so very many minutes later, they were feeling about five different kinds of thrills: Jacqueline the thrill of getting near folks of kindred spirit and interest and the other girls the thrill of strange and novel interest that affected each one differently.

Jacqueline went ahead, leading the way up

the steps and into the big room on the first floor. The minute the door was opened she felt at home— was n't every, dear familiar insignia of Scouting right there before her eyes? But to the other girls, the room looked delightfully strange. The whole center of the big room was bare as any barracks hall. At the left-hand side were four small, bare tables each surrounded by eight straight chairs, and in front of each a flagstaff topped by a small white flag tied with colors of various hues. On the other side of the room was nothing but a small table placed about the middle of the south wall. At this table sat a woman dressed in khaki uniform and hat and by her side stood a pretty young woman at attention.

Instantly Jacqueline was as at home in her surroundings as though she had many times been in that very room. Was n't it all just like her dear Scout home? To be sure the captain was n't Miss Alice and the room was on the first floor of the parish house instead of the basement of a Sunday-School room as she had been used to; but that made no difference, a captain was a captain, the flag was there in its proper place, and the girls assembling at their places at the various tables were Scout sisters

— even though she had never seen them before.

Leaving her four friends, Jacqueline went over and introduced herself to the captain, explaining who she was, where from, and why they were visiting. And, of course, after that every one was made to feel very much at home. There was just time, before four o'clock struck, to meet the captain, to be greeted most cordially, and to be shown seats in the front right corner where every bit that was of interest could be seen and enjoyed.

The call of the bugle brought the roomful of girls to attention and signaled for the formation of patrols and the beginning of the day's work. To Jacqueline, it was like going back home after a visit; to the new girls it was a moment of keen interest.

If any one had asked Margy or Nan or Martha or Peggy to tell just what happened after that and the order of occurrence, they would have had hard work to answer, for it seemed to them that something was happening every second. The formation of patrols, reports, inspection, the salute to the flag — it all went off with such military precision that the visiting girls could hardly keep track of it all, and certainly could not realize that girls

just like themselves were doing that nice work.

Next came some practice drilling, and after that the troop broke up into patrols and each took possession of one of the bare tables and went to work at a job.

Then for the first time the captain had opportunity to visit with the new girls and to answer questions.

"Could we really belong?" was the first question Margy asked.

"To be sure you can," replied the captain with comforting positiveness; "only I doubt the wisdom of your belonging to a troop so far from your own neighborhood."

"But Jack says there is n't any troop nearer," said Martha in disappointment.

"Well, then," suggested Jack, in a tone of voice that implied she was willing to attempt anything, "why not get up a troop of our own?"

"That 's a good suggestion," said Mrs. Colbert, the captain; "have you any one in mind who would make a good captain?"

Jacqueline looked at the other girls; they knew folks in Chicago so much better than she did that she could hardly hope to make a good suggestion.

"The very person," said Nan heartily; "Miss Shaw."

"The jolly person who helped us rehearse?" asked Jack.

"'Jolly' is right," said Margy laughingly, "and she'd do it if we ask her to, I'll wager, because she's always liking to do things for us girls." To Mrs. Colbert they explained that the charming first-year French teacher would, they thought, make an ideal Scout captain and that they would talk to her about it the very next day.

"Then if she will do it," said Mrs. Colbert, "you ought to find organization easy. She will have to take a course in Scouting, but, as there is a new class forming next week, that ought not to take more than six weeks."

"Six weeks!" exclaimed Peggy in dismay, "why, we wanted to begin this very next week!"

"And you may," replied the captain, laughing a bit at their enthusiasm; "you girls have a great deal to do yourselves before you can be real Scouts, so you, as well as your captain, may begin work at once."

"Won't you please tell us what we have to do," suggested Martha.

"I'll be glad to," replied Mrs. Colbert. But as she spoke she noticed that one of the patrols were waiting to speak to her, so she said, "I think, however, that I will let Lieutenant Arnold tell you about it while I do my duty with my own girls. They have been making picture books to take over to the Children's Hospital," she added, "and I want you to be sure to see their nice work before you go."

"You don't mean to tell me," exclaimed Margy, as the captain turned to speak to her lieutenant, "that, besides all this drilling and fun and inspection and everything, they do things for hospitals too?"

"That's just what they do," said Jacqueline proudly, "and sewing and learning to cook, and, oh, Margy, I never could tell you all the lovely things Girl Scouts do and have such fun while they are doing them."

Fortunately the lieutenant was not busy and she could give time and thought to the many questions Margy and Nan and Peggy and Martha wanted answered. "Of course you know," she reminded them, "that your friend Jacqueline could answer most of these questions herself —"

"But I'd rather you'd do it," said Jacque-

line, "because I don't know anything about Chicago and I know only how things were where I lived. They do seem pretty much the same all over when it comes to Scouting," she admitted, "and I know I'm going to love the new troop every bit as much as my old one."

The girls went directly from the Scout meeting to Miss Shaw's house. To be sure it was getting perilously near to dinner-time and teachers were not supposed to be bothered late in the afternoon. But this was a very special occasion and the girls felt sure Miss Shaw would not mind. She was at home, and was at once interested in their plan.

"I've read enough about Girl Scouts to be interested," she told them, "but I never thought of being a Scout myself. I wonder if it would interfere with school activities to have a troop among our girls."

"I'm sure it would n't, Miss Shaw," Jacqueline assured her, "because we always used to arrange our meetings to fit other duties. And if we have a troop among our girls we will all have pretty much the same engagements and can plan our meetings at the most convenient time."

They stayed till Miss Shaw's father came

home for his dinner, talking over plans, and deciding what they would most like to do when their troop was formed.

"Let's do some work for the Children's Hospital," suggested Nan. "Oh, Miss Shaw, you should have seen those lovely books we saw to-day! All made by hand and everything pasted in so beautifully neat."

"Mrs. Colbert said the children liked the home-made books so much more than boughten books," added Margy, "because each home-made book is entirely different and each has a story of its own."

"And let's do some of that cooking stuff you told about your troop doing," said Peggy. "I always did want to learn to cook, but our maid is such a tyrant she won't let me poke my nose into her sacred precinct."

"I'm for doing babies," said Jack. "We never had any around our troop I could practice on and I adore washing babies — I mean I think I would if there were any to wash!"

"I'm for making it an out-of-doors troop," said Martha. "Think of all the fun we could have at a camp and taking hikes and swimming and everything."

"To the dunes?" asked Miss Shaw.

"Yes," agreed Martha, "or a regular camp somewhere so we could cook and tent and everything, you know — oh, I think that would be marvelous!"

"Did you ever hear of such fun as we are going to have!" exclaimed Margy delightedly; "and think of the surprise when we wear our uniforms to school — we may, may n't we, Jack?"

"Yes," Jack replied; "we can wear them to school if we have to go right from the school to the meeting, otherwise not."

"Then let me tell you, Miss Palmer," said Margy, "the meeting is going to be at an hour and on a day when yours truly can't possibly go home to change her dress. I always have aspired to wear a uniform!"

"But, girls," Miss Shaw reminded them, "you talk as though you had your troop and everything was settled. I have n't decided to be a captain yet, and then, after I decide, perhaps they won't want me."

"I have a vision of sitting up nights worrying about that last perhaps," laughed Margy.

"*Would* you be captain so we could have a troop, Miss Shaw?" asked Martha. "I know it's a lot to ask when you are so busy, but if

you knew how we want a troop and how we want you to be captain —"

Martha stopped for lack of words convincing enough for her desires, but Nan rushed on "If you knew, you'd do it, Miss Shaw."

"And between you and me," laughed Miss Shaw, "I have a feeling I'm going to. Now don't count too much on me, though," she warned the girls as they were about to overwhelm her with gratitude; "you know I have n't much of an idea what this all means. But I'll do this. I'll talk with your captain, Mrs. Colbert, this evening. And then, if that looks as though I could do what will be needed, I'll go down to Scout Headquarters to-morrow after school and see what they say about it. Then we'll decide."

That decision — and the hall clock which chimed six, time for dinner — ended the talk for that afternoon. What would happen next would have to be learned another day.

X

ORGANIZING THE TROOP

THE next four or five weeks were busy ones for the group of girls who were interested in Scouting. Much to their delight Miss Shaw decided to be their captain, and, as she was willing to go right at the work, there was no time lost getting plans under way. Very fortunately it happened that the next week a class in "intensive training" for captains was to be begun at the Girl Scout offices in Chicago, and, by giving all her spare time to the work, Miss Shaw could qualify for her captaincy in three or four weeks. This she was very willing to do, for the more she heard and studied of Scouting, the better she liked it and the more certain she became that it was exactly the sort of work she had been wanting to do.

And as for the girls, they were not to be idle all these three or four weeks! Jacqueline brought her own handbook to school till the two Peggy and Martha had ordered could arrive, and at every odd minute the girls studied for the tenderfoot tests.

There were other things besides studying for the tests to be done too. A patrol, as Jacqueline told them, had to be formed of eight girls. They had five to begin with — Jack, Martha, Nan, Peggy, and Margy — who should the other three be?

"We want Tips, of course," said Nan.

"And Les," added Margy.

"And we want Joe," Peggy reminded them; "you know she's such fun at out-of-doors stunts."

"*Girls!*" exclaimed Martha suddenly, "do you know what we have done? We started this whole thing so as to reform Polly and now we are so interested we don't even mention her! Are n't we brilliant?"

"But Martie," objected Peggy, "it's all very well to reform Polly, and I for one wish the job luck, but all the girls we have talked of are upper-classmen, and do we want to stick in a wee freshman in our midst as 't were?"

"Snob!" cried Nan; "I'm ashamed of you, Peggy!"

"I'm not," replied Peggy, not in the least daunted; "and if you'll stop thinking 'snob' you'll see that I am right! Being the one and only freshman in a group of upper-class girls is

exactly what Miss Polly Lewis does *not* need in her young life! She needs a bunch of freshmen for a background and you girls very well know it — so there!" she finished triumphantly as the other girls stared at her.

"Something tells me the lady is right," said Margy, in comic imitation of Lewis Darington's modest manner of speaking.

"Stop acting silly and tend to business, Marg," said Peggy firmly. "This is a serious matter."

"Ouch!" groaned Margy, with a cheerful giggle; "how squelched I am—nobody knows how squelched I am!"

"Don't pay any attention to her," suggested Nan; "that's the best way to get her over that attack. Jack, can't you tell us what to do?"

"I was just thinking —" began Jacqueline.

"I *knew* something awful was happening," cried Margy, "I just *knew* it!"

"Somebody please sit on that child!" cried Martha. Suiting the action to her words she continued, "Now, Jack, go ahead and think out loud."

"There is n't any reason, you know," said Jack, "why we have to have only eight girls."

"Yes, there is," disputed Nan; "don't you

remember that the captain said each patrol had to have eight?"

"Of course," agreed Jacqueline, "but a troop can have several patrols. My home troop had four — that made thirty-two girls. Why could n't we have a patrol of upper-class girls and then help organize a patrol of the freshman and sophomore girls — they 'll be sure to want to belong when they see us get started."

"The very idea!" exclaimed Peggy; "why did n't we think of that before? I'll declare, Scouting seems to just fit for anything, does n't it? Then we can have the girls we wanted in ours without leaving anybody out."

"Who 'll we ask to be in the other patrol?" asked Margy.

"Polly, of course, and Betty," began Martha, "and Jane — that 's three."

"Girls!" exclaimed Nan, "Joe is a soph — ought n't she to be in that patrol?"

"Sure 'nough," said Martha, "she belongs there, and —"

"Why not ask those girls and then let them choose the others," suggested Jack, who, of course, knew more about the spirit of Scouting than the other girls did and realized that

each patrol does better if it chooses its own personnel.

"Good idea," replied Peggy; "and, anyway, we will have enough to do to look after ourselves — we may not be such wizards as we fondly think we are."

"Treachery!" exclaimed Margy. "The idea of suggesting such a thing! However, you may be right. Now, what do we do next, Jack?"

At that minute Leslie and Tips walked into the Girls' Club living-room where the conference was being held and silence fell upon the five girls assembled.

"Talking 'bout us! Caught you talking 'bout us!" teased Leslie, as she observed the silence that so suddenly fell on their arrival.

"Yes, we were," admitted Martha, "and it's lucky you came around just now—saved us the trouble of hunting you up. Now you tell 'em, Jack."

"Tell 'em yourself," replied Jack.

"Do and have it over with," laughed Tips; "I've got an engagement."

"Then you can break it," said Nan, "because we have important things to discuss. If you love something else more than us, run along, fickle lady — we don't want you."

"Then I guess I'll stay for the fun," said Tips, her curiosity aroused; "what's the idea?"

"We're going to be Girl Scouts and we're getting up a troop at Grant High and we invite you to be in the patrol we're forming," said Martha, as in sudden disregard of a carefully worked-out introduction, she exploded the whole plan at a breath.

"Well — I'll be —" began Tips.

"Of course you'll be a Scout," interrupted Nan, "and you'll be as crazy about it as we are when you know all we do. You have a uniform and drill and learn to cook and signal and pass tests and get Merit Badges and take hikes and, oh, a lot more."

"Anything they don't do?" asked Leslie laughingly.

"Nothing that I know of," replied Jack proudly.

"She is one, you know," added Margy, "and she's the one who started us."

"Who's going to belong?" asked Tips.

"Well," said Peggy, "if you girls will, then that will make seven and we need eight. Then we're going to start it for the younger girls and get a patrol for Polly and Betty and Joe and Adelaide and some of that crowd. We have n't decided who else to ask for ours."

"Have you forgotten Phil?" asked Leslie.

"I'll declare, we have!" cried Martha contritely; "are n't we the clever ones?"

"Just because the poor child has been out three weeks with the flu is no reason for forgetting her and she'd love this, I'd think," said Leslie.

"When's she coming back?" asked Nan.

"Monday, I guess," replied Leslie.

"Then I'll 'phone her as soon as I get home and tell her all about it," promised Martha. "You'll like her, Jack," she added. "She's bright as can be and awfully dear and sweet, too. Going to make Phi Beta, our honor scholarship society, with a big margin I hear, and is awfully popular with the junior girls."

"Then that makes eight," said Peggy. "Now, when are we going to meet?"

"Miss Shaw said we should talk that over and then come and consult her at the end of seventh," said Martha.

"What day *can* we meet?" asked Peggy; "athletics are Monday and Wednesday afternoons, clubs Tuesdays, and dances and big games on Fridays."

"That does n't mean that every Friday is taken," said Nan.

"No, but so many are," objected Martha, "and we want a regular time so we don't have to be missing meetings and changing around."

"What's the matter with Thursdays?" asked Tips.

"Thursday? Thursday?" repeated Martha thoughtfully; "is there anything Thursdays, girls?"

"Nary a thing," said Peggy.

"Then Thursday it is, and all meet at Miss Shaw's room at the end of seventh," said Martha, and the group scattered for afternoon recitations.

When the seven girls met Miss Shaw later in the afternoon, she approved all that they had planned and done. By this time she had taken some of the Scout work and knew what to tell them to study and how they ought to plan to be real Scouts. She helped them get started in their tenderfoot tests and planned to have the first meeting at her own home.

"For this first time, girls," she said, "we'll meet in my attic. I think it will be warm enough. You have all your 'head' tests learned, and then we can hear those and get started on our drill work. By another week I'll see if I can't get permission to have our

meetings in the parish house on the corner of Fifty-Sixth Street. That will be convenient and warm and big enough for anything we need. Better wait till then to ask the girls for the second patrol."

"Can't we even tell them about it?" asked Nan.

"Oh, yes," laughed Miss Shaw, "tell all you like. You'll want to be working up public opinion, anyway. But don't ask them to a meeting till we have a regular place to meet."

"Well, then," said Peggy, "are we Scouts now?"

"Heavens, no!" exclaimed Jack. "Have n't you read your handbook? You're merely tenderfoot girls as yet. You have to have four meetings and pass the tenderfoot tests before you can be Scouts."

"And then we get our uniforms?" asked Peggy.

"Yes, then," agreed Jack; "only you have to earn at least part of the money to pay for them."

"*What?*" exclaimed Leslie; "me earn some money?"

"Exactly," said Miss Shaw crisply, and she could n't help wondering what Leslie, who was

known to have far too much spending money for her own — or any one else's — good, would do about this part of the work.

"But I've plenty without earning any," Leslie reminded her.

"Maybe so," said Miss Shaw, "but that won't do you any good. You have to earn some of your own if you want to be a Scout."

"Then I'm going up to the studio on the North Side and see if I can get into a movie," exclaimed Leslie delightedly. "George Dartly says I'm a duplicate for Norma Talmadge and I know I could make a fortune if I only bothered to go up there."

"You'll have to figure that out with your mother," said Miss Shaw; "but you won't need a fortune for a uniform, you know, Leslie. Can't you think of something not so far off, and something that you are sure you could do?"

Leslie, who was clever enough at noticing things, scented that Miss Shaw was n't very much interested in the movie-star plan, so she gently agreed that she might find something else and let the matter drop for the present. And the meeting adjourned to hold the first regular session the following Thursday in Miss Shaw's attic.

XI

EARNING THE UNIFORMS

When Phyllis came back to school the next Monday morning, she found the locker-room a buzz of excitement about the Girl Scout plans. Of course she had heard all about the idea in her telephone talks with her friends. In fact, her father had suggested that such voluminous talking as she and her friends had done that last week of her absence almost made necessary an extra 'phone for Phyllis's exclusive use. But talking it over with the girls in person was a lot more fun than a dozen telephone visits, and she soon found herself in the midst of the fray.

"Les is going to do it!" exclaimed Tips, as she dashed in, rushing as usual and almost out of breath.

"Does her mother know?" asked Martha; "you know Miss Shaw said we had to have family approval of plans."

"Well, her mother can't know, 'cause she's down South," exclaimed Tips, "so what are you going to do about that, Miss Prim? Les

and I are going this very afternoon in Les's car and she's told her aunt who's taking her mother's place and her aunt said, yes, do anything she liked just so she had a good time — I'm for dear Aunt Julie!"

"The poor sillies," teased Margy, "what you girls will get will be a-plenty! Don't you know movie-acting is a business? You must think you're born lucky and good-looking — *both!*"

"When, as a matter of fact," tossed back Tips, good-naturedly, "you think we are merely — er — which did you say?"

"Fishy, little fishy in a brook," cooed Margy; "see you later, ladies, I'm late for assembly as is."

"I'm always late for assembly," groaned Tips, "and the look friend Darrow gave me last week seemed to tell me to be on time this morning. Who ate my French notebook? I know I left it here! I'd give a quarter to the kind friend who'd clean up this messy locker. Here's two lunch-boxes, ten odd gloves, and no notebook."

"Honest, do you mean it?" asked Polly Lewis.

"Mean what, honey?" asked Tips, who

never could remember what she had said a sentence back.

"Mean that you'd pay a quarter for cleaning out your locker," repeated Polly.

"You bet," laughed Tips; "want the job?"

"Yes, I do," replied Polly. "I don't know how to earn money, and the girls were telling us about being Girl Scouts and we have to buy uniforms and I want to get the cash."

"Cleaning out lockers is n't such a bad idea, let me tell you," said Nan approvingly. "Go ahead, Polly, and get all the orders you can. Charge 'em a quarter and keep the lockers in order for two weeks for that amount. I'll wager you get your uniform before Les does — unless she takes to something besides movie-acting for her income."

"What you going to do for yours?" Polly asked Martha as the group hurried along over toward the assembly hall.

"Have n't decided yet," said Martha. "Mother's going away for two nights next week and we were going to eat at the club. She said she'd pay me a dollar a dinner if I'd market and cook and clear up by myself."

"My family would pay me to stay away from the kitchen," laughed Peggy; "what I

know about cooking would n't feed a goldfish!"

"Oh, I can cook," said Martha; "that is, I can cook some things — enough for two dinners — and I believe I'll take mother up on her offer. Two dollars is quite a start even if it is n't enough."

"Our second maid is home taking care of her sister's children while they are sick," said Leslie; "who wants the job of making beds at our house?"

"Better keep that for yourself," said Peggy laughingly; "if movies fail, always have something to fall back on — that's my motto."

"*How* you people do encourage me!" said Leslie. "All right! You just wait!"

For two days the girls waited. As it happened Leslie could n't get her car on Monday, so it was Tuesday afternoon before the trip to the North Side studio Leslie had chosen for the beginning of her professional career could be undertaken.

Leslie and Tips planned for it carefully, providing, as they thought, for every emergency. At first, Leslie planned that Tips should go along in the rôle of maid, but that did n't suit Tips even a little bit.

"I've just as good things to wear as you have, Les Garrison," said Tips firmly, "and I'm going to be a co-star or nothing — I am."

"All right, then," said Les, good-naturedly, "we'll star together. Anyway, we do rather set each other off — you're so blonde and I'm so distinctly another type. I do think, though — and you must n't be too disappointed if I am right — that my type will photograph better than yours."

"I'll willingly leave that to the camera man," Tips assured her. "What you going to wear?"

"My new bronze green suit," said Leslie, "because it sets off my hair better than anything I ever wore. And I'm going to take mother's sables — she did n't take them South you know, and they're fearfully becoming."

"Sounds good, only you'll smother in sables," replied Tips. "I'm going to wear a spanking new spring suit that certainly is wonderful. And that tiny hat of bright green and a veil — my dear, you should wear a veil!"

When the girls climbed into the car at three-thirty that afternoon, the chauffeur nearly forgot his dignity and stared — but fortunately the girls did n't notice. They gave

the studio number on the North Side and then sat back in state, much impressed with themselves as they drove away. As a matter of fact, Leslie was not as stupid as she might appear. Her family had a number of friends among the business men connected with the studio to which the girls were going, and many of them, in a thoughtless moment, had suggested that she would make a good screen star. That she might take their remarks seriously had not occurred to them. But she did, and had often thought of doing the very thing she and Tips had undertaken to do that afternoon.

As they sped off toward the North Side, she told Tips something of the people she knew and of the appointment she had made with one of her acquaintances by 'phone.

"He always said that if I wanted to come up, I should just call him," she added, " and so I did. But I did n't tell him that we were coming for an engagement. We 'll wait till we get there and then ask for the director. I think he 's the man who selects new stars. He 'll be glad to see *us*, you bet!"

Arriving at the studio at exactly the appointed time, Leslie asked to be shown to Mr. Baldwin's office. There the girls were

greeted most cordially, and Mr. Baldwin rang for a guide to take them through the studios. He seemed very busy and not overly impressed with the grown-up-ness of his visitors. In fact, he treated Leslie exactly as he always treated the young daughters of his good friends — as little girls. Evidently he did n't notice the veils.

The guide arrived, and, before the girls had time to recover breath, or to get in a word about the reason for their coming, they were being shown over the building.

If the truth must be told, Leslie and Tips were greatly disappointed in the inside of that building. It was not thrilling or beautiful or — well, anything that they had expected. It was dusty and filled with things the guide called "sets" — corners of rooms and gardens and halls and yards. In some of these sets, folks were working, in two, pictures were being taken — the last for the day, the guide told the girls. But it all seemed so "workish," as Leslie called it, and not as thrilling as she had expected.

"When I get to be a star," she whispered to Tips, "I'm going to have a beautiful place to work and whole gardens and rooms instead of

these silly corners. Now let's tell him we want to go back to the office and then let's tend to business."

And, surely enough, when they reached the office, Leslie did get her courage up and tell Mr. Baldwin just what they wanted to do. But, alas! Instead of grabbing her hand and welcoming her into the profession, as Leslie had pictured him doing, he sat back in his chair and laughed. Yes, laughed. As though that was n't enough, he called his associate, also a friend of Mr. Garrison's, and together they laughed and laughed till Tips and Leslie got so angry and dignified that even those amused men noticed the frigid atmosphere and stopped to apologize.

"You must really excuse us," said Mr. Baldwin, "but, you see, we could n't help it. My dear little girl, every day this studio is visited by movie-crazy girls who think they can act, and it struck us as awfully funny to think you two girls came too."

"But you said — " began Leslie.

"Yes, I expect I did," admitted Mr. Baldwin regretfully. "You see, all you girls like it so well that we slip into the habit of giving you compliments by telling you that

you'd do well on the screen. But if you want the truth I might add that we assumed you went to the movies enough and had brains enough to know that movie-acting is a real business undertaken by hard-working people as a profession and that it is not a stunt for mere school-girls."

The blow had fallen!

When the girls got back into the car again and started for home, Leslie declared that her heart and her pride were broken and that never again would she be the same.

"You mean you're hungry," laughed Tips lightly. "Well, I will say it was a hard jolt, but why worry? So long as the girls don't find out, I don't care. But if you ever breathe it to one of the girls at Grant High, I'll never speak to you again, Leslie Garrison!"

And that is why, in spite of questions and hints and all sorts of detective work, the girls at the high school never heard a word about that much-heralded trip to the studio—never a word.

But — where was the money to come from?

For two days anything so common (though hard to get hold of) as money was more or less forgotten in the desire to find out about the

studio trip. But as the hours passed and not a single hint brought any news, the girls grew tired of asking unanswered questions and each began again to figure on her own problem.

Martha's was hardly a problem, for she knew enough of cooking to earn the money promised while her mother was away. Peggy had thought of a plan of developing some films for the *Grant High News* and getting for herself the money paid usually to a professional. Phyllis announced that she was making some "nighties" for her cousin and was to be paid a dollar a garment for the plain ones and a dollar and a half for the ones with more work. This would net her four dollars and, if she had time to make another, five, so her problem was settled.

Tips surprised the crowd by appearing at school one morning with six adorable little vanity cases, made from boxes decorated with flowers done in vari-colored sealing wax — so dainty and attractive that she had no trouble selling them for thirty-five cents each — twenty-five of which was clear profit for her work. Also she took orders for enough more to make the money she needed.

But nobody knew what Leslie was doing.

If she had a plan or an idea she kept it carefully to herself. Not until the second meeting, the first in the parish house, did the girls find out what she was doing. There, in response to a query from Miss Shaw, Leslie said, "Yes, I've three dollars already and I'll have more soon." And then, with a look of reckless defiance at her friends, she added, "I earned it doing the second girl's work and I'll have another whole week before she gets back!"

"Good for you!" shouted the whole patrol, and Martha added, "Who says Les won't make a Scout worth having?"

XII

THE BEACH PARTY

As the weeks after Jacqueline first suggested the Girl Scout idea to the girls at Grant High flew by, the organization gradually became perfected. The patrol of senior and junior girls chose "Crocus" for their patrol name and put the flower emblem on their uniform. To outsiders it might seem queer for senior girls to choose the name of so small and modest a flower for their own; but to the girls of that patrol, it seemed perfect. Never would they forget the first meeting they held as regular Girl Scouts! How they went home with their captain after the meeting and there in her front yard saw exactly eight dainty crocuses in full bloom!

"That's us!" exclaimed Peggy as she counted the blossoms.

"Then that's our name," proposed Martha.

Up to that time the name of their patrol had been a much-debated question. The handbook advised the use of names of flowers or birds or trees, but nothing the girls could

think of seemed to suit their particular fancy. These brave spring blossoms, the first of the season, seemed to typify their own first attempts at Scouting, and, when the number of blossoms proved exactly the same as the number of Scouts, the matter was settled.

The younger girls had politely waited till the others chose their name, but as soon as the word "Crocus" was announced the other patrol put the "Oak" symbol on their uniforms and began trying to live up to the sturdiness and strength of their name.

By this time every one of the sixteen girls was a Girl Scout, having successfully passed the tenderfoot tests, and every girl either had her uniform or was making one. Also several were well on their way toward the proud possession of Merit Badges. Miss Shaw recognized with pride that her girls were active and worth-while Scouts, so very active that she had to call for assistance, and the girls had secured the help of Bernice Gilbert, a charming college junior who was just ready, now, to qualify as a lieutenant of the troop.

But Miss Shaw realized that all work and no play makes dull folks, so though the girls scoffed at the idea of anything so jolly as

Scouting being work — *any* of it — still, she thought a bit of pure play would be a popular idea, and she asked the girls what they would like to do.

"A picnic at the dunes would be fun," suggested Peggy.

"I don't want to start objections," said Miss Shaw, "and I love the dunes. But I really do think we ought to try something nearer home for our first attempt."

"We might drive up the north shore and have a beach party near Ravinia," suggested Nan. "The baseball teams did that one year and it was piles of fun."

"Yes-s-s," agreed Miss Shaw, "that would be fun."

"But you think it isn't good Scouting to depend on cars," suggested Martha, as she rightly guessed the cause of Miss Shaw's hesitation.

"Why not have the party right on our own Jackson Park Beach?" suggested Phyllis. "That's near enough, goodness knows! Not over a mile from school. We could have a fire there exactly as well as at Ravinia, and it's near enough to walk."

"Yes, let's!" exclaimed Martha, "and let's have weenies and a regular roast. That's so

much easier and so much more fun than fussing with a lot of baskets and fancy picnic food. We can appoint a committee for buying the rolls and weenies —"

"Don't forget the pickles!" interrupted Leslie.

"And can't we have something sweet?" asked Polly, who, in spite of being already several pounds overweight, was always on the lookout for more sweets.

"Weenies and lemons are all you get this trip, Miss Lewis," threatened Nan cruelly; "the rolls and cake will be eaten by 'them as needs them,' as the lady who rules our kitchen says."

There was little for Miss Shaw to do by way of planning. Martha and Nan and Leslie invited themselves to be commissary department and do the buying at a cost — so they were instructed — of not to exceed twenty cents per person. Peggy, Phyllis, and Margy were to be head cooks with assistants from the Oak patrol to be appointed later. Tips promised to head the fire brigade and to have enough wood and kindling and matches on hand to do the job, and everybody was to meet at school at five on the following Friday afternoon.

After baseball practice that very same day, the commissary department went to Fifty-Fifth Street to order supplies. At a bakery Miss Shaw had recommended they ordered six dozen rolls—four for each Scout. At the first meat shop they went to, they found only the large-size weenies and were dismayed to discover that to order four apiece of *those* would bankrupt them. They were so very distressed that even the butcher took pity on them and advised them to go to a rival shop some distance east and buy the small-sized weeny carried there.

"They won't cost as much," he assured them.

"But will they be good?" asked Leslie.

"Oh," said the man with a shrug, "good to be sure. But next time, you be very rich and get big ones. Then I give you ten per cent off, if you come here."

The girls went as directed and found just what they wanted, and the butcher promised to deliver the package to the school office at three-thirty on Friday afternoon.

By the time pickles were purchased there was n't a cent left for sweets.

"Polly 'll never speak to us again if we don't

have something else," laughed Nan; "can't we think of something?"

"Apples?" suggested Leslie.

"Too late in the season for them," said Martha practically.

"And bananas are so dry," objected Nan.

"I know what," suggested Martha suddenly; "come on over to my house after Scout meeting Thursday and we can make some cookies. I know a wonderful recipe that I tried the other day and it's cheap as can be and awfully good. We can make them and take them as our treat — I know mother 'll be willing."

The cooking part of the patrol was busy with its own plans all the while. They invested forty cents in two wire toasters — that money did not have to count in the twenty cents per person as the toasters were to be part of the regular equipment of the troop. Also five cents each for two wire toasting-forks, of vicious length, for toasting weenies or marshmallows. For all these the three girls made covers of black oilcloth which fastened neatly, shut with snappers, and would keep the utensils clean and fresh for a long journey or a long time of storage.

Tips scouted along the beach and discovered to her dismay that the wood there was all so water-soaked that she would have to carry considerable if she wanted to make sure of having a fine fire.

"You don't catch me lugging old wood clear over there," she said to herself, and then she happened to think that she could have plenty of assistance if she asked for it. So she requested Lieutenant Gilbert to appoint a fire detail of six girls. These Scouts met at Tips's house Wednesday afternoon at five and in half an hour perfected their plans. What those plans were no one was to know till the afternoon of the party. But from the glances of that fire detail when any questions were asked by other Scouts, it was easy to see that some fun was afoot.

About ten minutes before five on Friday afternoon the yard in front of school appeared to overflow with Scouts. It's surprising how many sixteen girls can appear to be when they run hither and yon and are as happily excited as these girls were. Also they had a big audience of admiring friends — girls who had stayed for the baseball practice and who, seeing the fun, wished with all their hearts that they, too, were Girl Scouts.

Promptly at two minutes to five Tips and her fire brigade disappeared. Two minutes later they were back again, and Jerry, the head janitor, was with them. They had persuaded him to store their supplies for them and now they brought from the storeroom armfuls of supplies for a great fire.

"I'd like to know how you think all that junk is to be got over to the beach," cried Leslie, when she saw the piles of wood and kindling.

"You're going to carry it, darling," replied Tips sweetly, "or at least you'll carry your share." And then the girls saw what was meant.

That fire detail had prepared bundles of wood and kindling and had divided all their supplies into sixteen equal parts. Each part was tied snugly and had a loop for slinging it over an arm or shoulder.

"It's as easy as can be," Tips explained; "each one of you take a load and it won't be heavy a bit. Then we are sure of plenty of dry wood and we have the fun of carrying it all ourselves and being independent of any old autos."

The idea was novel enough to be popular,

and each Scout picked up her share ready to start.

"Where's our share?" asked the captain; "do you think your captain and lieutenant want to be slackers?"

"We'll let you take charge of the matches," said Tips. "That's the most important, if not the heaviest part."

The commissary department had packed the food in light-weight pasteboard boxes so that there would be nothing to carry home and, with a little help from the cooks, the supplies were all evenly divided up and the march to the beach began.

Along the Midway, now springing into the fresh green beauty of springtime, skirting the lagoon which sparkled in the afternoon sunshine, and over to the big lake the girls went, walking single file in real Scout fashion and singing snatches of favorite songs as they marched. The wind from the south made the beach seem warm and summery while the chill left from winter was just enough in evidence to make a fire a pleasant addition.

When the beach was reached, the girls broke ranks and began the serious business of making a fire. To Polly had been assigned this

very important task, and she had "studied up" till she knew exactly what she wanted to do and how to do it.

First she found a great log, and, with the help of two of the girls, rolled it into place. Then two smaller, half-burned logs were placed and a hollow scooped out to make the draft just right. Next she laid the actual material for the fire, carefully using the smallest kindling and saving the choice wood for later use. It was no wonder that, with everything just right, she was able to make her fire with the first and only match she used.

For the first fifteen minutes she kept it going briskly. By that time she was beginning to have some beautiful coals and the sand between the logs was getting good and hot.

"Five minutes more and you can begin cooking," she announced to the cooks, and the welcome news produced cheers of approval.

Boxes were then unpacked, toasters made ready, and a "bread line" formed, and in five minutes, promptly, the cooks went to work. The girls had the group so seated that the cooks who toasted the weenies passed them to the next girls who thrust them into split rolls. These girls in turn passed the filled rolls to the

next girls, who put a slice of pickle in with the weeny and these girls passed them on to others who were privileged to begin actual eating.

As soon as a girl had eaten one weeny, she moved up nearer the fire and took a turn at being cook and then went on down the line. By this method no girl would get too hot and tired cooking and each Scout had a chance at every job.

After the weenies had disappeared, the cookies were enjoyed and the cooks were declared to be as good as professionals. Then Miss Shaw produced her surprise — boxes of marshmallows for toasting — and for an hour the girls sat around the smouldering coals, singing and toasting and eating and enjoying the novel experience.

At last, when the new spring moon had changed from white to silver and now was showing glints of gold, when the twilight hush was brooding over the still lake, Polly gathered up every scrap of paper and every box and tossed it on the fire. Scouts, she knew, always leave a picnic ground tidy. By the brilliant light of the flames the girls enjoyed a "sing" and then — the party was over.

Every girl was safe at home before the night

was really dark and every girl declared that she had had the "best ever" time, and that this was only the first of countless numbers of parties the Girl Scouts meant to have.

XIII

THE FRESHMAN-SOPHOMORE MEET

It was lucky that the girls had their beach party just when they did, for the strenuous work of preparing for the freshman-sophomore drill began the following Monday morning. This drill, or meet, was a yearly event between the two classes and was entered into with keen enthusiasm. For some weeks ahead the two classes practiced apparatus work in the gym, drilling in military tactics, running races, and folk-dancing. Then on the night of the meet, each class gave an exhibition — before a big audience of admiring parents and friends — of their best work. A committee of judges sitting around with pencils poised over notebooks added a certain spice to the occasion, and then, at the end of the meet, while the judges were making their verdict, the upper-class girls did some stunt, often a basket-ball game, for exhibition.

It was a tradition of the school that the freshman girls should win. Nobody knew why, unless, perhaps, their newness at high-school

work gave an added incentive to hard practice and grinding drill. Sophomore girls, in times past, had been known to say that the very fact that freshman girls *were* new gave them an advantage, and that the judges expected far more of the older girls. But every one knew that alibis were bad sportsmanship and such treachery was not mentioned aloud.

Last year, however, for some unknown reason, the freshman class was defeated, so this year the sophomores were determined to win; and they knew it would not be easy because this year's freshman class was a good one and was working as hard as possible. Of course the older girls came in for their share of work and fun in the meet because they had to help the younger classes. The seniors were class sisters of the sophs and the juniors looked after the freshmen. There was the gym to decorate, cheers to make up and practice, and a thousand and one small duties for the older girls.

At four o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, the day of the meet, the gym sounded like a boiler shop, it was so noisy. Senior girls were stringing ribbons of paper, in red and white, across the balcony; juniors were in a corner pounding furiously on a great sign that was to

mark the freshmen's side; a few belated girls were taking their last try at apparatus practice, and Miss Voorhes was trying to put the last finishing touches on the folk-dancing.

"Betty!" she exclaimed, "do remember that you turn to the right there! No, not you, Florence, I said Betty! And *remember your partner!* Girls! Now do pay a little attention and get this right! Ready now — Ah-h — !" And the dance began.

But that was all it did do. Not ten measures had been played till Betty had lost her place, Florence had forgotten who her partner was, and was mooning around the circle like a lost sheep, while Joe actually turned around and whispered to Martha in a loudly echoing stage whisper, "Don't you dare go home, Martie, till you drill us in that new cheer again."

The noise and disappointment were too much for poor Miss Voorhes. Usually she was what the girls liked to call a "good sport," but the excitement, responsibility, noise, and hard work of the last few days had made her very tired and nervous, and she simply sat down on the floor in a heap.

"It's no use, girls," she said firmly; "we might as well give up. You have n't any mem-

ories and you refuse to use any stray bits of common sense you may have — or perhaps you have n't any of that. We'd better call off the drill."

"Oh, Miss Voorhes!" exclaimed the girls contritely; "we're not so bad as all that! Try us again!"

"No, I'm not going to," replied the teacher. "You've had your last chance. I'm too tired to stay here in this place another minute. Of course, we can't stop the drill — you'll just have to show yourselves as stupid girls before the whole audience. What they will think of me I don't care to contemplate. That's all for to-day. Meet here at seven sharp."

And without a backward look she hurried out of the room.

"Now look what you've gone and done," said Leslie to Joe as the door banged shut.

"No more than you with your silly decorations!" retorted Joe.

"Well, a lot of good all your post-mortems as to who's to blame will do!" said Phyllis. "The point is, are we going to let the school be disgraced or are we not?"

"Answer number one, we are not!" said Tips.

"Go to the head of the class, Miss Laughlin," said Margy admiringly; "are n't you clever, though?"

"For Heaven's sake, Marg, shut up, so we can think!" exclaimed Martha. "Now, girls," she added to the younger girls assembled, "how much do you know and how much ought you to practice further?"

"Well," began Polly thoughtfully, "we're weak on apparatus and drill and they're miserable at dancing — you could see that," she added cruelly.

"Who knows the dance?" asked Martha.

"Nobody in our class," replied Joe; "you could see that."

"*I* know it," said Phyllis, "because it's the same one we had last year. If you girls will come over here, I'll make you learn it or know the reason why."

"That's the idea, Phil," said some of the worried freshmen approvingly; "make them learn it!"

"All right," agreed Martha, "you and some other juniors drill them — and we only have fifteen minutes till Jerry'll be along to put us out. I'll take the freshmen for drilling — I don't know their particular work, but I've

been studying drilling for Girl Scout work, and I'll make 'em obey orders, and that'll be more than they've been doing," she added fiercely.

"But can't we go on with the decorations?" asked Leslie.

"Sure you can," replied Martha with ungrammatical firmness that was most convincing; "and if one of my squad hear a sound or look a look or speak a word, they're out — that's the end of them."

Never had the girls seen Martha so excited and so determined. Phil took her dancers over to the corner by the piano and put them through their paces with a vim that would have astonished Miss Voorhes. Martha took the rest of the floor, and the way she marched those dazed girls up and down, backward, sideways, and oblique, would have done credit to a veteran. Not for mere fun had she studied her Scout handbook—she knew orders and how to give them.

"There, now," she said, when the line came to a sharp halt with a breathlessness that warned her the girls were getting tired, "time for you to go home. Each one of you scoot! Take a bath, eat some warm supper — not a fancy dinner with dessert and stuff that

won't be good for you — and be — back — here — on — time!"

The girls blinked and went. When Martha gave orders, they simply had to mind; there was nothing else to do.

When the outside door banged on the last departing lower-classman, Margy dropped down on the floor with a giggle.

"Honestly, Martie, if they'd stayed another minute, I'd have had hysterics!" she cried. "The way they stared when modest Martie started ordering them around and bossing like a section boss! How could you do it?"

"Do it?" exclaimed Peggy; "you ask her? Can't you see she's a tyrant been masquerading all these years?"

"Nothing of the sort," laughed Martha, "as you very well know. But those youngsters had to be jumped out of their bad habits by something. Fact of the matter is they've been training too hard and they've nearly gone stale — that's what they've done. So I thought I'd scare them. They'll do all right to-night, never you fear."

"How'd you know all those orders to drill them?" asked Blanche.

"Learned it in her Scout book," replied

Jack before Martha had a chance to answer.

"Sure enough," agreed Martha, "and I did n't know what I was studying it for either, only I wanted to 'Be Prepared' and thought I'd learn it."

"Bright idea," approved Leslie; "but if this old gym is to be prepared, we'd better get busy, ladies." And the crowd of seniors and juniors fell to work with a will.

Two hours after the girls left the gym, it looked like a different place. In the glow of bright lights the gym looked like fairyland. Streamers of red and of green and of white swayed in the gentle drafts; gay posters bordered the walls and a crowd of happy, excited girls in snow-white middies and freshly pressed bloomers looked as bright and rested as though the day had just begun. The freshmen wore big green ties and the sophomores ties of bright red, and very trig and gay each one looked.

The orchestra tuning up, the gathering crowds, Miss Voorhes, rested and quite gorgeous with her huge corsage — the gift of the senior girls — all looked entirely different from the scene of the late afternoon.

"It's going to be a success after all the

croaking!" said Tips excitedly, as she rushed over to see that the freshman mascot, dainty little Jane Warren, daughter of the principal, was not going to feel shy among too many admiring girls.

"Polly's taking care of me," said Jane happily, "Polly 'n' Grace — 'n' I'm all right."

"That's a good girl," said Tips, approvingly; "and if Polly has to do something out there — " and she pointed out toward the gym — "you won't mind staying alone?"

"I'm won't mind," replied Jane; "not if Polly's all right I won't."

The whistle blew, and, after each class had had a chance to cheer for its rival and for Miss Voorhes, the meet began.

The freshman dancing and the sophomore marching went off beautifully.

"I don't see how they're ever going to tell which is best," groaned Nan. "They're both doing wonderfully."

"Wait till apparatus work," said Martha.

"Then's when trouble begins, because they can see each girl and have time to be as fussy as they please," replied Leslie.

And at that minute freshman apparatus work was called.

Polly was to do the ladders, and as she had worked hard for two weeks the girls all expected her to do some excellent work. Miss Voorhes was most particular that every girl should be protected from possible danger as she climbed or jumped, so groups of the upper-class girls were stationed here and there to help when needed. The senior girls helped the freshmen — who were, in a way, their opponents — and the juniors helped the sophs.

Martha happened to be stationed near the ladder where Polly had to do her assignment, and it was her task to see that, when one particular part of the work was done, the ladder was properly adjusted for the next work.

Polly, on her ladder, and four other freshman girls on similar ladders down the line, had done straight climbing and going under the ladder hanging by hands. Every girl had done her best and not a fault could be found with form or act. Then the ladders were straightened and braced for the next work, which was the hardest of all. Each girl was to climb up the straight part of the ladder, round over the edge and walk across the part of the ladder that was some eight feet above the floor — all without touching anything, with outstretched

hands. It was n't such a hard thing to do in ordinary gym work, but before a breathless crowd it did take courage.

Up they went, the five girls exactly together, over the turn, standing straight. Now there was just the trip across the top, the slipping through, and they would be back on the floor again with the hardest task of the evening over.

Halfway across — and a cry rang out!

Polly's going to fall! Polly's going to fall!"

It was little Jane, the freshman mascot screaming at the top of her lungs.

Tips ran to her side, but the damage was done. Polly, the steady-headed, who was never afraid of anything, became self-conscious. The crowd stared; Polly trembled, and the floor seemed miles away.

Then, just when she was sure she was going to fall, Martha's voice in a firm, calm whisper said, "Polly! Remember! You're a Scout. A Scout is not afraid!"

Instantly Polly stiffened. The fear that had enveloped her slipped away like a cast-off coat and she finished the ladder work without a quaver.

When she slipped safely to the floor, exactly

in time with the other girls, the crowd cheered, the sophomores cheered, and the freshmen shouted themselves hoarse. Polly was the hero of the hour.

But alas! Things don't always happen as they should!

The sophomores knew that now their chance of winning was slimmer than ever, and they fairly outdid themselves in speed and correctness of work, and the poor little freshmen, excited and sure of victory, made a dozen blunders in marching tactics and lost the meet.

But they had one victory, for, in announcing the winners, the chairman of judges added, "The committee wish especially to commend the freshman student, who, with steady head, was entirely undisturbed by a trying situation" — of course that meant Polly.

XIV

THE BIG IDEA

Two weeks of comparative quiet followed the meet. Days were filled with tests — departmental and otherwise — and with regular activities, and it was n't until Thursday of the second week that something interesting happened.

That Thursday was a beautiful spring day. The air was warm and balmy, and the cold of Chicago's spring seemed to have departed — at least for the time.

After the regular meeting of the Scouts, the girls loitered, lazily, as they started home. They well knew that lessons awaited their homecoming — and who's in a hurry for lessons when the out-of-doors calls?

"I wish we never had to go in!" sighed Peggy. "I wish they'd have school outdoors and have nothing but lessons I liked to do."

"While you're wishing, why have any lessons at all?" laughed Nan. "I would n't."

"If it was n't for those old comprehensive exams, I would n't either," retorted Margy;

"but with those staring me in the face, yours truly *has* to study."

"Don't you dare say exams to me on a day like this!" exclaimed Peggy; "don't I have to take 'em too?" For several of the girls planned to go to Eastern colleges, and of course had to take the comprehensive entrance examinations the latter part of June — no easy task, as the girls who took them the year before assured the seniors.

"I'll wager we're about dead when they're over," suggested Margy cheerfully. "Girls," she added, "what you going to do this summer?"

"Don't know," replied Phyllis; "until this week it's been so cold, we have n't even talked of plans."

"I wish I could go to a camp," said Nan longingly. "Here I am a senior, most through school, and never been to a camp. Mother thinks they're all so far away."

"Would n't it be fun," suggested Peggy, "if we could camp together! We ought to be able to hear of some place to go."

"Oh, girls," suggested Leslie, "why don't we Girl Scouts have a camp of our own?"

"Why don't we!" exclaimed Margy; "but where'd we go — the dunes?"

"And what'd we live in if we went?" asked Nan.

"And how long would our fond parents let us stay down there in the wilds?" questioned Peggy.

"How you overwhelm me with enthusiasm!" exclaimed Leslie sarcastically. "All the same, we would have loads of fun if we could find a place to go and if Miss Shaw and Miss Gilbert could go with us."

"And live in tents and cook our own food — Oh, girls!" exclaimed Peggy, "let's do it! Surely we can!"

By this time they had walked the two blocks to Margy's home, and there they sat on her front steps, day-dreaming about the fun they might have — if only they knew where they could have a camp of their very own.

Suddenly Martha sat up very straight and exclaimed, "Girls! I have an idea!"

"For Heaven's sake, catch it quickly!" replied Margy; "'tisn't often I get so close to a real one!"

"Marg, if you tease and make her forget it now — " threatened Peggy.

But Martha was too absorbed in her idea to care about what was said.

"You know my uncle Art's farm out near Wheaton?" she asked, and the girls nodded. Many a time had she told them of the delights of visiting her uncle, of the lovely woods, perfect tennis courts, and lovely gardens on her favorite uncle's summer place.

"Well," continued Martha, "on his place is a big gravel lot — oh, awfully big, and just full of lovely daisies and hazelnut bushes and trees and everything — "

"Then where's the gravel?" interrupted Tips.

"Shut up!" cried Margy; "who wants the old gravel, anyway? Methinks maybe Martie really has an idea."

"The gravel's in a pit at the side of the gravel lot — that is, as much of the gravel as is n't sold and hauled away, you know. And on this gravel lot — the pretty part, of course — Uncle Art let the Boy Scouts have a camp last year. And he furnished the tents and the board floors—Uncle Art's crazy about Boy Scouts."

"Does he know there is such a thing as Girl Scouts?" asked Peggy.

"Probably not," replied Martha; "you know we did n't ourselves till Jack told us."

"Well," suggested Nan, "why don't you tell him?"

"And tell him what charming girls we are," added Leslie modestly, "and that we want to camp terribly."

"We don't either," retorted Nan primly; "if you tell him we camp terribly, he'll never let us on the place. But if you want to tell him we terribly want to camp — "

"Prims, prunes, and preciseness," twitted Leslie; "are n't we the perfect grammarian, though. Go ahead and tell him what you like, Martie, only make it sound well."

"Say, honestly, Martie, *do* you suppose we could camp there?" asked Jack; "you have n't an idea what fun a Girl Scout camp can be! I always wanted to go to the one near Desplaines, but of course we're awfully late asking to go for this year. But if we could have one, just of our own, and learn to camp and everything — oh, it would be marvelous!"

"Do you suppose Miss Shaw would go along?" asked Martha.

"I'll bet she would," said Margy; "she's always ready for fun!"

"There she is!" cried Tips as she spied Miss Shaw turning into her own home some distance

down the street; "and there are the Oak girls taking her home. Let's run ask 'em." So eight girls dashed madly down the street.

Miss Shaw thought it was a fine idea.

"If your uncle has a suitable place, and if he would let us come, and if your parents were all willing," she said laughingly, "I don't see any objection."

"Then I'll write Uncle Art to-night and see what he says," said Martha. "No, I won't either," she added impulsively, "I'll telephone him the minute I get home. It'll not cost much, and then we'll know."

"When'll you tell him we can come?" asked Peggy.

"Yes, he may ask that," replied Miss Shaw. "How many of you girls take comprehensives — five? And those begin the nineteenth of June. Then better say the last Tuesday in June, and that would get us through just in time for the Fourth. You know families start going away then, and we could n't count on girls."

Martha, accompanied by Nan and Peggy, hurried home to do her telephoning. Fortunately, her uncle was at home and she could tell him all about what she wanted.

"Girl Scout, are you? Well, if it's anything like Boy Scouting, I like it," he said promptly.

That gave Martha a chance to tell him about what they were learning and doing and how much they wanted to go into camp so that they might learn more of woods lore.

"Then you shall do that very thing," said her uncle. "Come any time you like and we'll have the place ready. That is, we'll get it as ready as we do for the boys, and we'll see what sort of Scouts girls make."

"Can we come the last Tuesday in June and stay a week?" asked Martha. She could hardly believe her good luck, and she wanted to make sure that she heard rightly.

"I'm marking you down on the calendar for then," said Uncle Art. "Now you'd better appoint a committee to come out here and inspect the place, so you will know just what you need to bring and how the land lies," he added; "they can come out some Saturday."

The word fairly flew from one Scout to another after that, and by the next morning every one of the sixteen girls knew about the proposed camp and was eager to help make plans. Of course they wanted to call an extra meeting at once, but Miss Shaw reminded

them that there was really plenty of time, and that they could make still better plans after they had had six days to think and talk over the idea.

The thrills of the annual tennis tournament paled when compared with the fun of planning for camp, and only Miss Shaw's reminder that Girl Scouts must put business (which in this case was study) before pleasure, made them settle down to lessons.

At the regular meeting the next Thursday there was a hubbub of talk the minute the inspection and drill were over. Such fun as it was to plan! Martha, Betty, and Miss Shaw were to go out to Mr. Welles's summer home Saturday of the following week and see just what equipment he could have for them.

"I know he has two big tents," said Martha, "because I saw them when the Boy Scouts were there. And they pitched them under lovely big oak trees."

"Then perhaps each patrol could have one for sleeping-quarters," suggested Miss Shaw, "and we could eat out of doors."

"That's just what they did last year," said Martha; "and for rainy days they stretched a flap out from one tent."

"And where did they cook?" asked Peggy.

"On an open fire," replied Martha.

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed Peggy; "I'm so glad I'm going."

"That reminds me," said Miss Shaw, "I think you girls should work for cooking proficiency from now on, because if you are to cook all the food you eat in camp, or nearly all of it, you will want to have some training. You have over six weeks now before camp, and, if you really want to learn, you can acquire considerable knowledge about cooking in that time."

"And we'll have to buy all our own food," said Martha; "commissary work, the boys called it. They had a perfectly awful time at first, Bill said, because they had all bread and meat and no salt or sugar, or anything else but just bread and meat the first two days."

"There's work for you!" exclaimed Miss Shaw; "and if Martha suggests anything more, I'll have to postpone the camp till you learn enough to have one!" she threatened laughingly.

The girls took hold of camp preparations with their usual enthusiasm and efficiency.

Martha was appointed to have charge of

buying; and it was her place to appoint aides and to see that they studied buying, menu-making, and accounting. Jack was to look up the amount of bedding needed, to get assistants, and to see that she secured enough for use.

Phyllis, who had something of a reputation as a cook, was to choose helpers and to see that they had training enough to protect the appetites of hungry campers from starvation.

"But what'll *we* do!" exclaimed Polly; "there's nothing left for the Oak patrol!"

"Aren't we grabby!" said Margy contritely, when she saw that the older girls had thoughtlessly taken all the best jobs.

"We can get helpers from the Oaks," suggested Nan.

"I know a better way than that," said Martha. "Each patrol appoint cooks and buyers and housekeepers and then work on alternate days during camp. Then we can see who are the best."

"Yes, but could the buyers work that way?" asked Miss Gilbert.

"The two sets of buyers could work together," suggested Miss Shaw. "And in the weeks before camp, each patrol can appoint

buyers and they can study out what they think we shall need. Then the best list submitted, by vote of the troop, will determine which troop is head buyer."

"That's the idea," approved Margy; "and when we get in camp, we can vote from day to day and see who's best cook. I want the job of taster!"

"Oh, girls!" exclaimed Tips with a sigh of bliss, "are n't we going to have fun!"

And the happy faces of the girls showed that the prediction was unanimous.

XV

THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

When Peggy reached home that afternoon after Scout meeting, she found Opportunity awaiting her just inside of the door. For at that particular spot her mother greeted her, telegram in hand, and a woe-begone face.

"Peggy, dear!" she exclaimed tragically, "whatever shall we do?"

"What about?" asked Peggy; "anybody sick or what's the matter?"

"Aunt Ellen's sick and has been taken to the hospital, and I have to go this very evening to look after the children, and at best I can't be back before the first of the week."

"That's too bad, mother," said Peggy regretfully, "and we'll miss you a lot."

"You will, indeed," replied Mrs. Loring ominously, "for that is n't all. Katie" (referring to the maid who had been with them for years) "has a message too, from her sister in Elgin. Her two children are down with measles and she has to have help. So Katie has already gone and I'm going. You can go

out for dinners — I suppose you'll have to; but you know how your father hates that — and whatever you'll do over Sunday I'm sure I don't know!"

Much to Mrs. Loring's amazement, Peggy did n't look the least despairing. Instead she threw her arms around her mother and exclaimed, "Such luck! Such beautiful luck I never did expect to have! Now I can learn!"

"Learn what?" asked Mrs. Loring.

"Learn to cook," replied Peggy.

"Yes, with nobody to teach you," laughed Mrs. Loring; "do be sensible, Peggy. I have so much to think about — I ought to be getting off this very minute, for I have to go to the station immediately after dinner."

"You tend to your packing and everything and don't worry a minute about father and me," said Peggy comfortably. "I'll call up Phil and tell her about it. You won't mind if Phil and Martie and Nan come over for the week-end, will you, mother? You know you've been promising me they could come soon, only Katie does n't like company."

"Yes, dear child, I know," said Mrs. Loring; "but you don't seem to understand. It's very well to have guests, but what will they eat?"

"Food," replied Peggy promptly.

"Cooked by whom?" asked Mrs. Loring.

"We girls," said Peggy. " You see, mother," she added reassuringly, "Phil's a splendid cook — or, at any rate, she can cook *some* —"

"That's more than the rest of you can," interrupted Mrs. Loring.

"We're going to learn," Peggy replied hopefully. "Phil knows a lot. She can be head cook and teach us."

"But there is n't enough in the house to cook," objected Mrs. Loring.

"All the better," said optimistic Peggy. "We can buy it, and we want to learn that too. You tell us how much money we can spend — Martie says you always must know how much you want to spend, *before* you begin to buy, so you can plan — and then we'll buy everything and cook it and clean up and all — just as nicely as Katie does; you'll see, mother. That is, if the girls can come."

And Peggy hurried away to the telephone, where she easily secured gleeful acceptances from three delighted girls.

"Of course we're sorry somebody's sick," added Martha politely, as she agreed to come, "but did you ever hear of such good luck?"

After school the next afternoon three girls deposited overnight bags and books in Peggy's pretty room and then sat down to the serious business of feeding a family.

Peggy showed the money her mother had left. "And she said we could charge if we did n't have enough."

"We'll not charge," said Martha positively; "it's a very bad habit for young housekeepers. I read that in a book. We'll live on our income — that's the money Mrs. Loring left. Now what shall we have to eat?"

"Chocolate cake and ice-cream?" suggested Nan, "and grapefruit salad."

"Sounds good and plain and sort of substantial," said Martha sarcastically.

"I adore fried pork chops," said Peggy.

"Fried?" asked Martha; "have n't you read your handbook, child? We don't fry things any more."

"Two squelched," laughed Nan; "it's your turn, Phil."

"Maybe we'd better have some patties of something dainty," suggested Phil, who was scrambling around in her mind for something that would sound very elegant and yet within the range of her abilities as cook.

"No patties at this house," said Peggy hastily; "my father's a regular tired business man, and you have to feed him well — or — well, you have to feed him well," she repeated lamely.

"Perhaps it would be just as well to have plain food for a beginning," suggested Martha. "Do you know how to broil a steak, Phil?"

"Yes, if it does n't cost too much to buy it," replied Phil. "I've heard that steaks cost money."

"Let's get a book and see what sounds easy to cook," suggested Martha, "and then we can make out a list of what we'd like to have that we can cook, and then, if it costs too much, we'll have to change, that's all."

They finally decided that, as the time after school was so short, they would plan and market only for Friday's dinner and Saturday's breakfast. And that the other Saturday meals and Sunday meals could be provided for later. After much counsel, the menu for Friday's dinner read as follows:

Broiled steak. Baked potatoes. Scalloped tomatoes.
Bread and butter.
Fruit salad. Coffee (for one).

It was with much regret that a fine dessert

was abandoned, but, as it was already about four-thirty, the girls very well knew that something would have to be omitted or dinner would not be served at six-thirty.

List in hand the girls hurried up to the Fifty-Fifth Street markets, and in half an hour's time made their purchases; also fruit, eggs, and rolls for breakfast. They had foraged in the ice-box and found butter and cream in abundance.

It was a case of "cash and carry," for there was no time to wait for deliveries, so the girls took their own packages and hurried back to work. Phil took charge, and sent every girl to scrub her hands before she could touch a single article of food. Then they put on aprons they had brought and the tasks were apportioned out. Phil promised to cook the meat and tomatoes. Peggy was to set the table — because she knew where everything was; to prepare the bread and butter and assist with the steak.

"But I want to cook something," objected Peggy.

"Did you ever set the table before?" asked Phil.

"Never," laughed Peggy.

"Then you do that," said Phil firmly; "and if you get it done quickly and perfectly, maybe we'll let you make the gravy for the steak — now get to work."

Martha was to scrub the potatoes and get them in to bake, and then put away the supplies for breakfast, while Nan had the important job of making the salad. Fortunately the Loring kitchen was not too tiny and there was room for all four girls to set to work.

Phil opened a can of tomatoes and poured them into a baking-dish. After seasoning them with sugar and salt, she mixed in a few bread crumbs and set them in the oven. By that time Martha had the potatoes in to bake and was washing the fruit for breakfast. Peggy had to call for help to put the cloth on straight, and nobody could find the napkins till Peggy remembered that her mother always kept them in cases, very neatly, and then there they were, in a blue denim case right where the girls had looked a half-dozen times!

Nan washed the lettuce and dried it, and wrapped it in a cloth and put it on ice. Then she peeled and diced apple, banana, and some California grapes, dripped some lemon juice

and salad oil on them, and put them in the ice-box too.

"Now make your dressing," advised Phil; "here's the recipe, and then get your plates ready. That's all you can do till the last minute."

Each girl worked hard and fast in the hope of being ready when Mr. Loring came home, but of course that does n't mean there was no talking. As a matter of fact there was so much chatter that nobody heard Mr. Loring come in; nobody guessed he was near till he walked into the kitchen.

"How you did scare me!" exclaimed Peggy as she rescued the platter she so nearly dropped. "These are your new cooks, father," she added. "Phil — she's the boss, Martie and Nan. And, oh, dad," she added enthusiastically, "you're going to have the *best* dinner you ever ate."

"So?" said Mr. Loring; "sounds good, at any rate. What's it going to be?"

"Oh, beefsteak and potatoes and — a lot of things," said Peggy.

"Steak cooked yet?" he asked.

"Not yet," said Phil regretfully, "and I'm sorry too, because we wanted to be ready the

minute you got here. But it won't take long."

"Don't you worry, Miss Head Cook," laughed Mr. Loring; "shall I tell you what I'd like better than having it ready when I arrive?"

"Yes?" asked the four girls expectantly.

"I'd like to broil it myself," said Mr. Loring.

"But you don't know how!" exclaimed Peggy.

"Don't I?" replied Mr. Loring. "Much you know about my cooking abilities! With Katie bossing the kitchen a man does n't get a chance to keep his hand in! But I used to go camping and cook— *girls!* Could I cook? You bring me an apron and I'll take my coat off and show you how to do it!"

Such fun as there was then that kitchen had never seen before! And with it all, nothing was spoiled. The steak was done to a turn, the potatoes were mealy and luscious, the tomatoes were just right, and the salad was crisp and cold.

Long after every scrap of food had disappeared, the five lingered at the table listening to camp yarns Mr. Loring could tell them and getting advice for the camp they were so soon to have.

"I did n't know you knew so much," said Peggy admiringly, as at last they gathered up the dishes and prepared to finish the work of the meal.

"A person does n't often have the opportunity to show off — like this!" laughed Mr. Loring.

"You're going to get another chance, too," promised Martha. "You come out and visit us in camp this summer, and show us how to do it."

"That I will," said Mr. Loring. "And I suppose there would be no rule against bringing — say — well — about five pounds of candy when I came along?"

"If anybody objects," declared Phil, "I'll eat her share!"

And if that first evening at cooking was any sign, the Scouts at Troop Twenty-One's camp were to have plenty to eat.

XVI

MAKING PLANS

On the Saturday morning following the cooking party, Miss Shaw, Martha, and Betty took an early train for the country. Miss Shaw had discovered that by taking a local they could get off at Gravel Oaks, a tiny station not a hundred yards from Mr. Welles's estate and right by the plot where the camp was to be.

It was an interesting ride out from the city; first through the "yards" connected with the railroads, then through manufacturing districts, and finally through pretty suburbs into the open country. The trees were tinted green with tiny leaflets, birds were singing, and the sense of spring was in the air.

"I just can't wait till we have it!" exclaimed Betty as Miss Shaw folded up the lists the three had been studying. "To think we are coming out here to *live* — to live for a whole week! Won't it be perfect!"

"Just wait till you see Uncle Art's woods," promised Martha. "Then you *will* be glad you came!"

And sure enough, not five minutes later, the train stopped in the heart of a lovely woods, and Martha piloted her two guests off the train by a tiny little shelter that was the only station there was to be seen. Woods behind them, woods in front of them — woods everywhere but on the railroad tracks — and a carpet of flowers that stretched on every side.

"Don't you just want to put your face down to the ground and smell!" exclaimed Martha happily. "I always love to come out here in early May because the wild flowers are so profuse then. Uncle Art's so careful about the flowers being picked recklessly that he keeps plenty growing. It seems a shame that, unless folks are watched, they pick great handfuls of flowers only to throw them away when they wilt. And there really are plenty of flowers for all to enjoy if only folks are careful of them."

Just then there was a whistle and Mr. Welles himself came into view.

"As sure as I count on that local being late, it fools me," he said by way of laughing apology for his tardy greeting. "But maybe you'll forgive me if I show you a view — come this way."

Tiptoeing through the woods to avoid crushing the countless wild flowers that grew so profusely, the three visitors followed their host up a tiny hill, over the crest — and there they stopped in delighted amazement. Before their eyes stretched a panorama full of delight for city-tired eyes. Near by a meadow, fresh and green, in the distance a farmhouse with an orchard in full glory of bloom, and still farther away a hillside tinted with wild crab and redwood blooms.

"Don't show us any more such views if you expect us to go home," said Miss Shaw after they had feasted their eyes and had turned to go up to the house. "I never quite realize what I miss by living in the city, till I am reminded that the country really exists. If we are to camp anywhere near that view, we are lucky."

"You are to camp right there," said Mr. Welles.

He had led them around the side of the hill till they faced the east. To the left, as they stood gazing, was his own home; three hundred yards away, straight ahead, was another hill, its side sharply cut away by excavations for gravel; to the right, the railroad with a rolling golf links in the far distance. Directly in the

center, between the hills, was a flat, grassy plot toward which Mr. Welles was pointing.

"See those posts?" he asked his guests. "They mark where the Boy Scouts had their tents. A little later in the season we put floors for two big tents, and then, when the boys come, they pitch the tents that I have ready for them in my garage. The big pile of stones, a bit to the right, are all that is left of their 'stove' of last year."

"What happened to it, Uncle Art?" asked Martha.

"When the boys left, I had them pile up the stones that way. They had a perfect arrangement for cooking — draft just right, oven for baking potatoes and everything, but it was almost too handy for tramps, so we dismantled it for the winter. You girls can learn how to make it up again if you're good at camping," he added encouragingly, "because the stones are all there and I have the sheet-iron top put away with the tents."

As he talked, Mr. Welles led the party down the hillside and over to the place where the camp was to be. It was a perfect camp location, flat, sheltered without being too shady, and in every way convenient.

"What's that hole that looks so caved-in?" asked Betty as they poked around exploring.

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Mr. Welles, laughing at her puzzled expression, "that's where the ice-chest goes."

"The ice-chest!" cried Martha; "I never heard of an ice-chest in the ground."

"I'll wager there's a lot you haven't heard of," laughed Mr. Welles, "especially about camping. Into that hole you'll have to sink a big box I have. Then you put sand and fine gravel till you have it a foot deep, then you set in another box, smaller than the first one, and around it you pack more gravel and sand. Into the inner box is put your milk and butter, and, as long as the outer packing of sand is kept wet, the food will keep cool and sweet."

"Think of that!" exclaimed the girls admiringly; while Martha added, "Then wetting the sand must be a daily job of the supply department—won't the girls be puzzled when we tell them?"

Miss Shaw then took out her list of questions to be answered, and the two girls made notes of all Mr. Welles could tell them about what they would need to bring, what clothes, bedding, utensils, and food, and also of such advice as

they must be sure to remember to give to the other Scouts.

It was an ideal situation for a beginners' camp. The spot was in sight of the house; was under care of a gardener who could be appealed to for advice, but who left the gravel lot as wild as though it was in the back woods; water for drinking was piped only a short way off, and everything for the comfort and health of girls who had much to learn about woods life was provided. And best of all — Martha had kept this for the last, as she wanted to surprise Miss Shaw — about five minutes' walk through the woods was a charming little lake that sparkled gayly in the spring sunshine and seemed to fairly invite a swim.

The girls were allowed to pick one handful of choice wild flowers and to put them in water during luncheon. Mrs. Welles explained that if wild flowers are put in water for an hour or so before carrying them, the stems become water-soaked and carry much longer without wilting.

"I often think," she added when she saw how interested the girls were, "that if visitors to the woods would only content themselves with small clusters of picked flowers such as you

have, and then would let the blossoms lie a bit in a spring or in the lake, they would have many more flowers when they reach home than they possibly can have when they pick recklessly clear up to the minute the train whistles — and then have to throw away so many wilted blooms."

That she was right the girls discovered when they reached their own homes in the late afternoon and found their dainty blossoms fresh and fragrant as when picked.

At the next regular Scout meeting the visitors made a report of their explorations that was listened to with eager interest — not a bit dimmed by the fact that the Scouts had heard most of it first thing Monday morning, and had talked of little else since!

Jacqueline had a report ready, too, which consisted in a request that each girl find out if she would be allowed to bring her own pair of blankets and pillow (if she wanted one).

"If you can, girls, that will be a lot easier than getting them from one or two places, and each girl can be responsible for her own."

Betty was appointed head buyer for the Oaks and Polly head cook, and they both were to have assistants chosen and menus and lists

made out ready to submit at the next meeting.

"We'll have to make plans very definitely now," said Miss Shaw, "because in a couple of weeks reviews will begin, then come examinations and the gay times of graduation week, and however much you may want to think and work for camp, you won't have a minute to do it in. So work now, while there is time."

"And now is a fine time to finish up work for your second class Scout tests," added Miss Gilbert. "When you're in camp you'll have fine chances for working toward flower proficiency, for instance, and you want to get your second class tests passed and out of the way."

"I'm going out for photography," said Nan. "You know that new camera I have? I was reading in the handbook the other day about the requirements for the photographer's badge, and I know I can get it if I try."

"I'm trying for the flower badge," said Betty. "You should see the flowers out there! I'm going to take along mother's flower guide and work for that badge."

"I'm going to get my cooking one before we go," said Phyllis, "'cause mother says the head

cook in each camp ought at least to be able to do that much."

"You work for cooking, too, Polly," said Jack gayly. "I don't intend to feast from Phil's cooking and starve the day you have charge."

"You just wait and see," promised Polly. "I've learned three things already — and I'll not tell what they are either, Miss Curious," she added, "only you'll like 'em and I'm learning more. So there!"

"By the way," said Peggy as the senior girls walked home together a little later, "when did you get your last crush note from Polly, Martie?"

"Um-m, let's see," said Martie thoughtfully; "I don't believe I know. Anyway, it's ages ago."

"Do you understand that?" asked Peggy.

"Understand what?" asked Nan.

"That the crush notes are no more," replied Peggy.

"By jingoes!" exclaimed Margy; "something tells me you're right! Polly's cured!"

"And so thoroughly we never even noticed it," laughed Martha. "That's something for Scouting! And, oh, girls, did you ever imagine so much fun as we're going to have in camp?"

XVII

THE FIRST DAY IN CAMP

After the meeting, when the work of preparing for camp was discussed and planned for, the days seemed to dash madly by. Reviews and what Margy called "oodles" of home work; the week of final exams; the class day with its play, party, and dance, all crowded into one glorious fest of fun, and then the day of actual graduation when the seniors, very dignified and with a lumpish feeling in each throat, walked up for the coveted diploma — it was a never-to-be-forgotten week.

Then the rest of a quiet week-end, comprehensive exams for the five candidates for Eastern schools, and then — cheers! — camp.

All day Monday the girls made plans, bought supplies, packed clothes — and unpacked them because the bundles were too big — and dropped hurriedly into each others' houses or telephoned continually, to the utter distraction of families and other friends. But at last everything was ready and the girls turned in early. No one wanted to oversleep in the morning.

Jack's brother and Polly's mother had promised to drive the Scouts to the down town station in time for the seven-thirty local, and that meant starting early.

Promptly at six-thirty the honk of a horn in front of Margy's house told her that Bob had arrived, and Jack's excited call, "Hustle up, Marg; don't stop for primping; we're five minutes behind schedule!" sent that Scout dashing down the steps, grip and blanket bundle in hand. It was n't far between houses — distance is nothing with a high-powered car, to be sure — and in twenty-five minutes the car, full of laughing, happy girls, was spinning down Michigan Boulevard toward the Loop.

Just as they made the turn at Thirty-Ninth Street, Margy screamed, "Girls! I've forgotten the ukulele!"

"What is a camp without a ukulele?" queried Peggy sadly.

"What's forgotten is left behind," said Miss Gilbert. "It's too late to go back."

"It would be for anybody but Bob," replied Margy sweetly (Margy always was a diplomat!), "but you should see Bob drive, Miss Gilbert! It would n't be *anything* for *you* to dash back to my house and let me get it, now, would it, Bob?"

Bob, being no less susceptible to flattery than the rest of humanity, replied, "Certainly not. Really we have *plenty* of time!" And slipping around the block he started the dash back toward the Midway.

Seeing one of the girls glance fearfully at the speedometer, Margy bent forward as though to tie her shoe, and let her handkerchief fall over the speedometer.

"Facts are sometimes *so* hampering," she murmured softly, by way of explanation.

Before the car stopped at her house, Margy was on the running-board, and while the engine chugged restlessly, she ran up the steps, through the front door, which luckily was open for the morning airing, grabbed up the instrument which had been set close by the door, "where it could n't possibly be forgotten," and was back again in the car quicker than one can read about it. Then began the real dash for the train.

It was a lucky thing that there was little traffic in that early morning hour, for if Bob had had much to avoid or stop for, he could n't have made the run. But as it was, they reached the station with exactly one minute and a half to spare.

Polly was posted at the foot of the stairway to tell them that tickets were purchased and they should stop for nothing.

"Miss Shaw just said she *knew* you'd gone back for something!" added Polly. "Now, do, for Heaven's sake — MOVE!" And the girls certainly did!

It must have been a funny sight to see eight young girls and one college woman, each loaded with grip and a rolled blanket, to say nothing of other packages, run madly up the marble steps of the Northern Western Station in the very face of the incoming crowds of early suburbanites. People turned and stared — but little did the girls care! They were bent on making that train — and make it they did!

Miss Shaw had held her girls at the car platform, for, if the other group did n't make the train, she thought they would wait till the nine-thirty and go together. But when Nan, in the lead, came into view, Miss Shaw let her girls climb aboard, and, by the time the whole eighteen were on the train, the conductor shouted, "All Aboard!" and the journey to camp had begun.

"We must have looked charming!" remarked Peggy as she mopped her face.

"Close your lips, breathe deeply, and mentally count ten," suggested Margy, as she waved her hand toward panting Peggy.

"Shut up!" laughed Nan; "you're as winded as the rest of us! Well, anyway, we 're all here — including the ukulele!"

"To be sure," said Margy, rescuing the instrument from its crowded place between two Scouts; "want me to sing for you?"

"Please *don't!*" begged Martha; "it takes moonlight and a romantic setting to make your singing sublime, sweetheart. In the glare of early morn — "

"Will you see who's here!" interrupted Nan, and the whole crowd turned toward the back of the car where they saw Mr. Loring coming toward them.

"Why, *dad!*" exclaimed Peggy; "where did you come from?"

"Home," said Mr. Loring innocently. "I heard that some of my friends were going camping to-day and so —"

"Are you going with us?" cried Peggy in delighted bewilderment.

"Well, of course, if you don't want me — " said Mr. Loring. "But I thought there might be tents to put up and stakes to drive and all that — "

"I can hardly believe our good luck!" exclaimed Miss Shaw. "I have never camped before, and, though I have been studying and studying, I have a sneaking feeling that a good many things will come up that I do not understand. It will be a great relief to me, as well as a pleasure to us all, to have you along."

"Do you really know how to put up a tent?" asked Margy.

That set Mr. Loring off on camp yarns which lasted till the station was reached. When the whole party tumbled off at Gravel Oaks, the girls felt sure Mr. Loring was an absolute essential to the success of the camp.

When Mr. Welles met them, Miss Shaw attempted to introduce the two gentlemen, and found to her surprise that they had both been in the officers' training camp at Fort Sheridan and that they were tried friends.

"The only point we missed knowing is that my daughter and his niece were classmates — we did n't discover that till last night," laughed Mr. Loring. "And that's one big reason why I'm out to help for the day."

"Everybody off?" asked Mr. Welles, as the train pulled out, and evidently everybody was, for when Miss Shaw gave the order to "Form

ranks" and "Forward march," sixteen Scouts with all their luggage fell into line and, under Mr. Welles's guidance, marched to the site of the camp.

After that every one set to work. Under the able leadership of the two well-trained men, the Scouts were divided into groups for various jobs. One cleaned the wooden floors for the tents; one brought the tents from the garage, and, when the floors were ready, set them up; one made the fireplace and oven; one gathered wood and brought supplies, which had been expressed out, from the house; one prepared a proper place for the disposal of waste — that most important factor of a healthy camp; and one group made the underground refrigerator.

Of course there were other things to do, too — the flag to set up and salute, for instance; and how the girls did thrill when the June breeze set their own flag to waving over their own little camp kingdom! And food to arrange in an insect-proof box that was made by standing a packing-box on blocks, which in turn were set in small pans of water. Polly, who was very handy with a hammer, made shelves, and so contrived that there was plenty of space for meal-to-meal provisions.

It was all such fun. The hard work seemed mere play, it was so interesting and different, but, oh, how hungry it did make them!

Nan was about to say she could n't stand it another minute, when the smell of delicious cooking set them all to sniffing.

"Something tells me food is near!" exclaimed Margy as, with a comic imitation of early Indian days, she scanned the distant horizon.

"Something tells me that, if you don't wash your hands, you'll not be given any food when it arrives," threatened Martha darkly.

"Wash hands in camp?" asked Margy. "I thought dirt was necessary to successful camping. Dirt, flies, and mosquitoes — that's what I've always read."

"Then you've never read about a Scout camp," said Jack. "We have a proper place for waste and place to wash and we brought mosquito nets — so, if you think you won't be happy, there's a train in ten minutes."

"I guess I can stand it if you can, dearie," laughed Margy; "lead me to the wash-room!"

Much to her surprise, Martha led her to a shady spot behind the tents, where a long pipe lay on the ground turned up and ended in a

nozzle. There, by turning a valve, a clear stream of water flowed out and into an upstanding drain tile which carried it away without making a muddy mess on the ground.

"Talk about your pampered children of the effete city!" said Margy; "we can be so clean and comfortable we'll hardly know we are camping."

"Not exactly," laughed Martha, "because you have to run to your tent and get your own towel; also take care of it — which is more than you're used to doing, I know. But is n't it wonderfully well planned!" she added admiringly, as other girls, too, gathered around to see the unexpected convenience Mr. Welles had planned for them.

A warning toot of the dinner horn stopped further talk, and there was a mad rush for towels and soap and the campers made themselves tidy for dinner.

What that first meal lacked in convenience it made up for in fun, and nobody even noticed the lack of plates — which were still unpacked, or knives and forks.

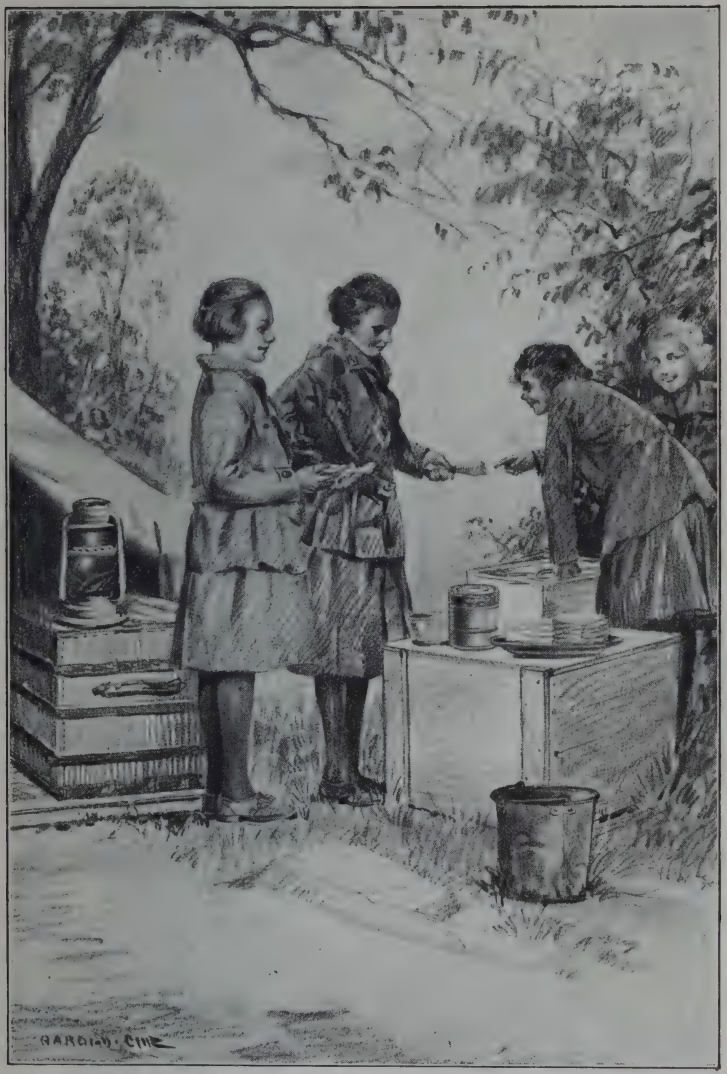
"All the fewer dishes to wash, so we need not worry," said Betty, as Phil began a tactful apology.

"It's food, not frills, that pleases me," said Polly as her turn in the bread line came and she was handed a paper napkin, a baked potato, and a luscious chop fresh from the coals.

The girls "sat 'round" while the cook division passed salt and butter and tin spoons. Then potatoes were split open, the butter dropped inside, and the eating began. To be sure, there were butter sandwiches of wholesome bread, and cupfuls of fresh milk and basketfuls of cookies and fruit, but the potatoes and chops cooked on the new ovens were the main feature of the meal, and every scrap was eaten.

After dinner the girls spent an idle hour, chatting in the shade, gathering dainty clusters of daisies or exploring in the woods just back of the gravel lot. Then the call of the bugle brought them back to work again, and the job of setting up camp was finished in fine style.

When Mr. Loring took the train back to the city at five-thirty, he had the satisfaction of knowing that every cot stood in its proper place, every pair of blankets was rolled in army fashion ready for instant use, every mosquito



"IT 'S FOOD, NOT FRILLS, THAT PLEASES ME," SAID POLLY, AS HER TURN IN THE BREAD LINE CAME

bar was folded correctly, and the kettle was boiling for an early supper.

The whole camp went up to the tiny station to see him off and give him a parting cheer and an invitation to come again.

"Can you believe it?" asked Martha, as the girls sauntered back to camp — "can you believe that it's really us and we're here in these lovely woods and going to stay a whole week?"

"What *are* you doing, Margy?" demanded Peggy, before she could answer.

"Me?" asked Margy innocently, as she more or less stood on her head in an effort to do something. "Oh, I'm just a-pinching myself to see if it's really true, and myself says it is."

"Such a comfort to be assured," laughed Nan. "Marg, you'll be the death of me yet! We'll never get to sleep to-night, girls, if she's in the tent."

"Suppose we make her sleep outside?" suggested Leslie.

"You can't do it, you're scared to," taunted Margy, giggling. "I'll howl like an owl and yowl o'er the place till you beg me to come back!"

"Better take the worst and let her alone,"

advised Peggy. "If she gets loose, she'll be getting Les and Tips into mischief, and then we never will sleep!"

But the girls need n't have worried. The day's hard work, the plain, abundant food, and the soft night air spoiled Margy's carefully laid plans. In the few minutes during which she pretended sleep just after they got to bed, sleep really came, and the next thing Miss Margy knew was the call of the bugle as it thrilled

> I can't get 'em up!
> I can't get 'em up!
> I can't get 'em up in the morning!

in the early morning sunshine, the next day.

XVIII

MARTHA'S SURPRISE

"ARE we to do just whatever we want to all day, Miss Shaw?" asked Phyllis the next morning as she hung the last clean tea-towel in the bright sunshine. A glance toward the orderly tents showed the morning work all done there, and she knew that her own kitchen duties were over for a while.

"Yes, and no," replied Miss Shaw laughingly. "I don't think it would be much fun for each girl to do something by herself, but I am sure we can easily find something you will all want to do."

"And don't forget what we were talking about last evening," said Martha mysteriously. "This is a perfect day for it."

"Forget!" exclaimed Miss Shaw, "I can hardly wait till the right time!"

"Martha Harding!" exclaimed Nan, "if you know anything we *don't* know —"

"I'll keep it to myself!" interrupted Martha teasingly. "So don't try to be Polly Pry, for you'll never make me tell!"

"You'll all know at eleven, anyway," said Miss Shaw comfortingly, "so why worry?"

"But that's two whole hours!" mourned Polly dolefully.

"I'll hold your hand or anything you like," suggested Margy, "but I'd really rather hunt wild-flower roots if you could spare the joy of my society."

"The very idea, Marg," said Betty. "I was going out for flower work and got so interested in camp I forgot. May we hunt 'round in the woods all we like, Miss Shaw?"

"Yes," replied Miss Shaw, who had already advised with Mr. Welles and knew what was best to do; "provided you stay on the Welles ground — and that means inside the wire fences that are set with concrete poles — you will be within bounds and quite safe. Don't go beyond those fences without special permission."

"But that means we can go over acres and acres," added Martha, by way of explanation, "because Uncle Art owns clear over to the — I mean quite a way." Martha interrupted herself and finished her sentence very lamely.

"Something tells me you *nearly* told your

secret then, Miss Harding," teased Peggy. "If this crowd stays around here any longer, the poor child won't have a shred of a secret left, so I'm leaving."

"I'll go with the girls who are going to study wild flowers," suggested Miss Gilbert. "Get your botany cases, girls, and let's go!" she added; and in two minutes a half a dozen girls, tin cases in hand, started exploring the woods west of camp.

"I'm going to take three pictures," announced Nan, "and I'm going to hunt just the right scene and have the light as it should be and everything, so don't anybody bother me."

"Good luck to you," said Jack; "I'm going to study signals. Did you ever see such a wonderful place for sending messages as that sharp point over there?" she added, pointing to the high bluff toward the east where the excavations for gravel had left a ragged and very steep cliff called Gravel Point.

"That *is* a good place," agreed Polly. "I'll tell you, Jack; I'll stay here and see if I can read what you signal and then you see if you can read back."

"Those plans all sound good," approved

Miss Shaw. "Suppose we say each girl may work on something toward a proficiency badge until eleven o'clock. Then we will have a bugle call and meet here for Martha's surprise."

The next two hours were busy ones for every Scout, and the call of the bugle came before any girl had done all the work she had set for the morning. But work had to wait till another day. Everybody was eager to hear Martha's secret and so lost no time getting back to camp.

"Now, then," said Miss Shaw, when cameras, botany cases, and flags had been stowed away in their proper places, "I'll turn the camp over to Martha."

"Every girl into her bathing-suit—five minutes allowed," commanded Martha.

"Bathing-suit!" exclaimed Margy; "for the love of my pet poodle! My bathing-suit's in Chicago."

"Why did n't you tell us, Martie!" cried Jack; "I've a new one and I never even thought to bring it!"

"You'll find them on your beds," laughed Martha; "that is, if your mothers sent the right ones. I sent out a package last week, supposed to contain an outfit for each girl."

"Now, what *do* you think of that!" exclaimed Peggy.

"I think it's peachy fun and mighty clever of Martie, too," said Nan; "but how we're going to take turns standing under that one small pipe for a 'swim' amuses me. Won't we look cute, though? However, it'll be fun the first time, so here goes." And she made a lightning change from her uniform into her swimming-suit.

When the girls had changed and were back in the center of camp again, Martha lined them up for marching and started west, through the woods.

The girls, tipped off by Nan, who thought she understood Martha's plan, laughed and joked about a water-pipe swim, and never once suspected the real treat till, running up a slight rise in the ground, they suddenly came on to a tiny lake, rippling and sparkling in the hot sunshine.

"Real water!" exclaimed Peggy; "Martie, you darling! To think we can swim!" And without more ado she dashed down the beach, into the water, and was swimming off toward the middle of the lake.

The other girls lost no time following her,

and in a minute every girl was in the water. All had taken at least a few swimming-lessons in the university tank that winter, so each girl knew something about swimming, but not all were equally proficient. The seniors, who had had three years of lessons — one term each winter — headed for the diving-stand, and began showing off their favorite stunts, while the younger girls were quite content to swim not too far from shore. All but Polly.

Polly went up to northern Wisconsin each summer and, along with her brothers, had learned about everything there is to know of swimming. She could swim above or below water, could dive several ways, and float and swim supporting another, to say nothing of other feats.

A little to the west of the diving-stand was a great willow tree and the branches overhung the lake in graceful fashion. Dangling down from one of these branches hung a heavy rope with a ring in the lower end.

Nan spied it and asked, "What's that for, Martie?"

"Oh, you climb up the tree, crawl down the rope, and jump into the lake, of course," she laughed.

"Silly!" exclaimed Polly, who was using her eyes, "you don't, any such thing! You stand there on the high bank, grab the rope, swing out over the water, and drop in. Is it deep enough to be safe?" For Polly knew enough about water to respect it and take no senseless risks.

"Plenty deep," answered Martha; "I know because Uncle Art uses the rope to jump from. And see?" She swam over to the spot where a drop from the rope would land a swimmer, and, treading water, showed that the bottom could n't be reached by her toes.

"Then here goes," said Polly. And, grabbing the rope firmly in her left hand, she swung twice out over the water and then jumped, landing in the water with a fearful splash.

"Ugh! that *is* fun!" she exclaimed when she got the water out of her eyes a second later; "here goes again!"

"That's not my style," said Betty with a shiver; "I'd no more jump from that old rope than I'd try to fly! I'm going to find something else to do."

"See that old log over there?" suggested Peggy; "let's get it and float on it through the

water." Around the tiny bay toward the east the two girls raced. It was hard work getting the great old log into the water, but once afloat it was no trouble at all to push it out into deep water and to swim along beside it.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Jack when she saw Peggy's idea, "let's get one, too, Phil! There's another log over there!"

But Phil and Jack did n't swim by their log. They decided to be aboriginal savages and ride the log a-straddle, paddling to make their way over the lake. This worked very well, though it was rather what one might call "tippy" traveling.

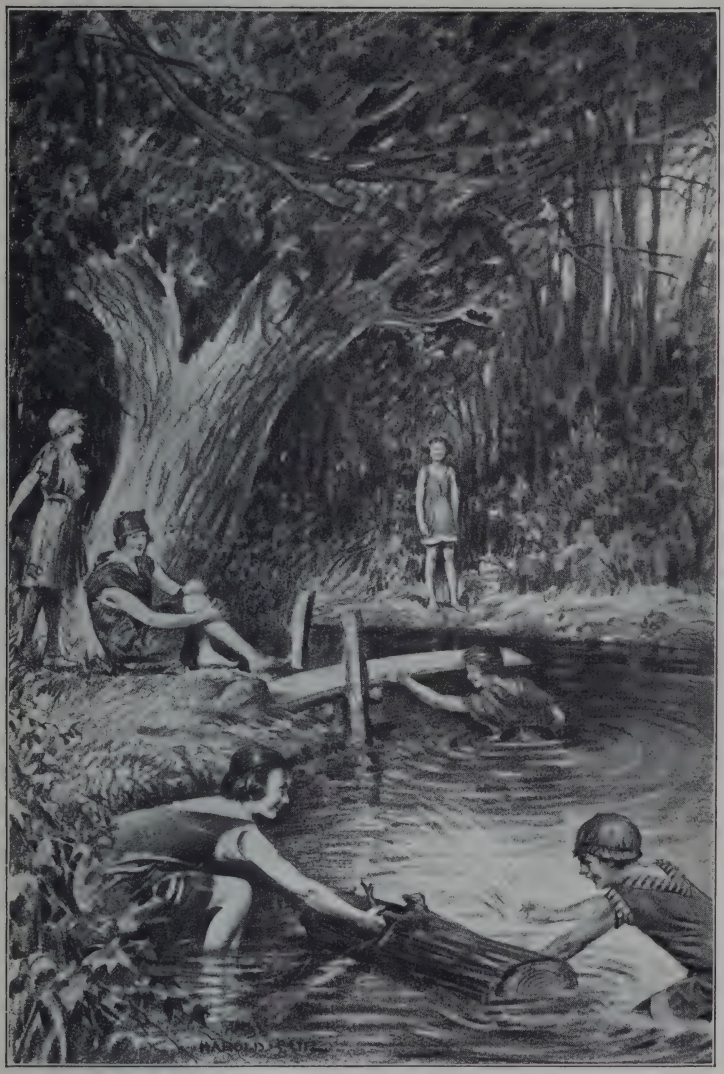
"Come on, girls, let's all get logs," suggested Martha; "there's a lot of them down there and then we can race!"

"We'll challenge the whole lot of you!" cried Phil; "we can — *Jack*, sit still!" she interrupted herself, "I'm falling off."

"Sit still yourself," retorted Jack, "I was just a-rolling the log."

"Well, you 'll have to announce when you roll it," said Phyllis, "now, all together, get set — go! Now we're off."

"You paddle left and I'll do right," suggested Jacqueline.



IT WAS HARD WORK GETTING THE GREAT OLD LOG INTO THE WATER

"No, let's both do both hands," said Phyllis; "that's evener. Look at those girls!" she added as Martha and Nan, who had mounted a great log and were riding out toward the center of the lake, suddenly found the thing turning turtle under them slipping them both off into the lake.

It was a funny sight to see the pairs of girls, only heads and shoulders showing above the water, paddling about in a desperate effort to make a race.

Nan longed for her camera, and resolved that the next day she would bring it along and get a picture even if she did have to point the camera south in the attempt!

The laughing shouts of the girls brought an audience of small children who made a daily habit of coming from the village, a mile away, for a swim. They gathered at the north end of the lake, near the diving-stand and the rope; from which point of vantage they shouted directions to the girls and applauded each time a pair of paddlers got a ducking.

Peggy and Betty were going neck and neck with Phyllis and Jack for the honor of winning, when a violent splash near the diving-stand made each girl look up.

"Who dived then?" called Martha.

"Just one of those youngsters," said her team mate, Nan; "must have dived off the rope — see how it's swinging? Steady, Martie! If those girls get another ducking, we'll have a chance to win!"

"But look at that youngster!" said Martha, and she stopped paddling and watched the boy who had jumped in from the rope. "See how he's holding up his hands and gasping?"

"Silly!" exclaimed Nan, more than half provoked at Martha, "don't you suppose he'd call if he wanted help? Anyway, boys can always swim."

"Well, that one doesn't seem to be able to and I know something is wrong," said Martha; and without more argument she slid off the log (sending Nan deep into the water without a bit of ceremony or a "by your leave") and made for the north shore with her fastest stroke.

Miss Shaw, who hadn't taken to a log, was swimming near the diving-stand. She had noticed the boy jump from the rope, but, thinking probably, as the girls did, that he could swim and that he would call if he wanted help, was watching the log race without a thought of need near by.

Martha swam closer and closer and, just as Miss Shaw noticed her, the boy, near the swimmer, dropped out of sight. Something surely was wrong, but why had n't the child cried out?

Martha, keeping her thoughts very steady, for now that she had had a glimpse of the boy's face just before he went down she knew that something was very wrong, though she could n't guess the reason for the boy's silence, swam right to the spot where last she saw him. Then, diving, she caught the boy's hair and pulled him to the surface.

An insane fear shone in the child's eyes and made them fairly glitter, but he said not a word. Instead of a scream Martha expected, he gripped her neck in a choking grip that took her breath. Instantly she laid her right hand over his mouth, holding his nose between her two fingers. Then, treading water all the while, she took a quick full breath and with her right knee kicked vigorously at the boy's stomach. This had the desired effect of making him lose breath, and, as he could n't get more, relax, so she could get the use of her arms and hold his face above water.

From then it was only the work of two or

three minutes to swim with the child to the shore so very close at hand.

All of this took less time than is needed to read about it, and, almost before the racers realized that something was wrong, Martha, with Miss Shaw's quickly given help, had the boy up on the beach, where his gasping showed that he would soon be all right. He had n't been in the water long enough to need real first aid — fright was the worst thing, that was plain.

Miss Shaw patted him on the back and said, "You'll be all right now in a minute, son; did n't you know how to swim?"

No answer.

"I just got you out in time," said Martha, hoping by a laughing word to restore his lost self-confidence.

No answer.

"Well, it's a good thing for you that the Girl Scouts went swimming to-day," said Miss Gilbert, as the racers, the race quite forgotten, paddled or swam toward the north shore.

Still no answer.

Miss Shaw was much puzzled, especially as the boy seemed all right.

But, before she could question him longer,

a woman came running around the bend in the road.

"Oh, he's all right! He's all right!" she exclaimed thankfully.

A few quick words between her and Miss Shaw explained the whole thing. The family were visiting kinfolk in the village and the boy had come, with his cousin, for a swim. He knew how to swim fairly well, but doubtless the shock of jumping from the rope had frightened him, so he did n't know just what to do.

"Susy came running for me saying that Johnny was drowned!" exclaimed the poor mother; "and well he might be," she added, "because he could n't call for help—he can't speak or hear."

"Oh," said Martha, "that's why he did n't call."

"That's why," repeated the mother, "and if you had n't just happened to watch and notice — "

"But I did notice," said Martha reassuringly, " and we'll notice every day we come to swim. That's a good thing for Scouts to remember — notice how a person acts and don't depend entirely on cries. Well, who won the race?"

"That'll have to be decided to-morrow," said Miss Shaw; "if we don't start home soon, it will be a dinnerless camp."

"That wouldn't please me," said Peggy firmly; "I could eat a whole ham."

"Then let's start," suggested Phyllis, and the march of dripping swimmers headed toward camp.

XIX

AND THE NEXT DAY IT RAINED

After the excitement of the log races and the thrills of what Margy called a "real live rescue," the girls decided that they would swim twice a day and get as much time in the water as was possible to have in the five days left for camp. But when Mr. and Mrs. Welles came to the camp for the moonlight sing that same evening, plans changed.

"Have any of you ever seen a real Dutch windmill?" Mr. Welles happened to ask in a pause between songs.

"I have, when we were in Holland," said Jacqueline.

"I mean in this country," said Mr. Welles.

"There are none, are there?" asked Martha, who, knowing her uncle's liking for teasing, was on the lookout for a joke on herself.

"To be sure, there are plenty," said Mr. Welles; "and this is no joke. There is a very good one in a fair state of preservation about four or five miles northeast of here. Wish I had a machine that would hold you all and we'd run over and see it to-morrow."

"How far did you say it is?" asked Miss Shaw.

"Something like four or five miles," replied Mr. Welles; "a cut through the woods makes it not more than four, I fancy."

"Then could n't we walk there?" asked Peggy. "You know, Miss Shaw, we were to take one long hike if possible."

"That's what I was thinking," said Miss Shaw. "It would be jolly fun to hike four miles, have our lunch, and hike back again, would n't it, girls?"

"And get some pictures of a truly windmill in addition," added Nan; "would n't that be a help to my collection!"

"Of course you can do it," said Mrs. Welles; "we should have known you'd want to take a hike. And if you go through the woods, you will find some more painter's brush. The flowers are always a bit later in the marsh woods there, and I know you could n't get enough specimens yesterday for your books."

"Then let's plan to go about ten," said Miss Shaw. "Reach there by noon at the latest, even if we stop *en route*. Luncheon, pictures, and the journey home ought to bring us here by four."

"But, Miss Shaw," exclaimed Margy, "our swimming! I love a windmill, but my own little log — I hear it caw-l-ling me!" And Margy rolled her eyes in mock tragedy that made the girls double up with laughter.

"You shall have your little log," laughed Miss Shaw. "I fancy a swim at four, after a long tramp, would be just about the very nicest thing any person could offer me."

"Then if we're going to pack lunches and get off early in the morning," suggested Miss Gilbert, "we ought not to sing much longer, now."

"No, Lieutenant," agreed Margy, "yours truly will 'hit the hay' shortly—if that is the proper military term for what you want us to do?"

So after a final singing of the ever popular "K-Katy" and "Good-Night, Ladies," the moonlight sing broke up and camp settled down to sleep.

Next morning was clear and beautiful. The few stray white clouds promised a bit of occasional shade, and preparations for the hike were set under way.

Each girl was given two meat sandwiches, two salad sandwiches, and two sweet sandwiches.

"Those are for building, for minerals, and for energy respectively," said Polly, who was studying dietetics and didn't mind airing her knowledge to any who would listen. "And then you each get a bar of chocolate — that's good muscle food when you walk — and an orange cut in quarters. You can suck those if you get thirsty before an accredited well is reached."

"Heavens! How much you do know!" exclaimed Margy, in mock admiration.

"Well," said Phil cruelly, "she tells *all* she knows, so you can always be sure there is no reserve supply."

"Is that so!" retorted Polly; "well, just for that I'll add that we may each take some raisins because they contain concentrated nourishment. Now, see, I knew that too."

"Yes," laughed Phil, "but to continue—?"

"Well — er —" stammered Polly, "I guess that is about all we studied this morning."

"Never you mind, Polly," comforted Martha; "you know more than most of us do, so don't worry! Who's to pack the lunches?"

"Each girl has to do her own," announced Polly. "We have everything out here on the table and you have to pack your own. There's

paraffin paper and napkins there and here are the three sorts of sandwiches all in piles ready for packing. Don't take more than two of each — that's plenty when the sandwiches are so big, and we counted noses and made just enough — even count."

"I wish the girls would come and get their stuff," said Phil, "so we could clear up before flies discover the eats."

"Betty," suggested Polly, "get your bugle and sound the call for mess, there's a dear! That'll bring 'em."

And it certainly did — very quickly.

Promptly at ten the Scouts, with lunches and cameras or botany cases loaded on their shoulders, formed in line and started the hike. Out into the road, east to the village, north across a meadow to a pretty woods, and, with a short rest at the end of the second mile, on to the old Dutch settlement.

Sure enough, there was a windmill! A quaint, squatty mill, gray with age and paintlessness, turned gently to and fro in the summer breeze. Nan took a half-dozen pictures, and was just about to hunt some deep shade for refilling her camera when out from the house, so quaint and weather-beaten, there stepped a small girl, almost hidden in a Dutch bonnet.

Down the walk toward the mill she went, and from a sweep took a bucket which she filled with water before returning to the house.

"Girls!" exclaimed Martha breathlessly, "did you see?"

"Are they real or are we dreaming?" demanded Peggy.

"They're real!" replied Phil, as a gentle "clump, clump, clump, clump" told the girls that the little lady before them wore—wooden shoes!

"Will somebody please tell me that I'm within twenty-five miles of Chicago?" demanded Peggy.

"Yes, dearie, you are that," said Margy; "also somebody will add the old, old phrase, 'Will wonders never cease'?"

"Wait till I get her picture!" exclaimed Nan, frantically turning at the film she had just inserted.

"I'll give her some chocolate," volunteered Margy generously, "and that'll give you more time." So she stepped up to the little girl, so hidden by the big bonnet that her face was not visible.

"Won't you take a piece of candy, my dear?" asked Margy kindly.

The bonnet slipped back and a sunny, youthful face and a pair of honest eyes looked up at Margy most gratefully—and Nan got her picture.

Miss Shaw went up to the house for water, according to Mr. Welles's arrangement by 'phone, and the girls made temporary camp in the woods across the road.

Never did sandwiches taste so good and shade seem so grateful, for, though the walk of four miles was a mere nothing for girls in training for it, these girls had not walked that far off city streets—maybe never before in their lives.

After lunch the little Dutch girl's mother invited the girls to come in and see the house—the big old-fashioned fireplace, which she still used every day; the curious wooden cradle with a hood of wooden slablike pieces fitted together into a solid top designed to keep out a draft; and the great brass kettles that took time and energy each day to keep in shining condition. Also a row of shoes — best shoes — which the family boasted.

The girls would have stayed all day, admiring these unexpected treasures, but a glance through the window made Miss Shaw realize that the sunshine of the morning was

gone, and that, if they wanted to get home before a June rainstorm, they would have to hurry.

"Lucky I took my pictures first thing," said Nan thankfully, as, bidding their kind hostess good-bye, they struck out on the road for home.

"Indeed it was," agreed Peggy; "also, it's lucky our lunch is eaten, for something tells me we're going to get wet."

"Double-quick time across the meadow!" ordered Miss Shaw, and that order was followed in a minute by another, "Break ranks and run for shelter!" as the big raindrops began to patter down.

Laughing and breathless they reached the shelter of the woods, out of sight of the old Dutch house and half a mile along the journey toward camp.

There they stood, under heavy foliage, for a few minutes while the rain poured down in torrents. Soon it came through the trees, driving branches this way and that and soaking the Scouts to the skin.

"Girls!" exclaimed Miss Shaw, "no use standing here and getting chilled! We're wet, anyway; let's walk on home and keep warm by exercise. Water won't hurt us if we are warm."

"Who's afraid of wet?" asked Margy.

And the Scouts answered back, "Not a Scout!"

Forming in single file the girls started back toward camp, singing and talking as they marched.

By the time the village, a mile from camp, was reached, every one was warm, steaming warm, and gay as could be. Singing while marching is great sport — who cares for mud, even on shoes and skirts, if she is having a good time?

"I'll wager we look charming," laughed Martha as she spied a face in a window and saw the woman who looked at them call to others, who came also to see the passing sight. "Town side show! Nan, it's a pity you can't take a picture of us."

"Don't say picture to me!" retorted Nan. "I have my camera in a rubber case, lucky dog that I am to have had it along, but, if that camera feels like I do, it's swimming around inside the case. *Were* you ever so wet?"

"Never!" said Polly peacefully. "Water before me, water behind me, water, water everywhere — is n't there some poetry like that?"

"Oh, girls!" exclaimed Jack, "let's make up a song about us and sing it as we walk through Main Street. While we're shocking 'em, let's do a good job!"

"Seems to me you are," laughed Miss Gilbert.

"How do you make up poetry?" asked Betty.

"Start singing some tune we all know," suggested Peggy, "and then make up words as we go along."

"Try 'John Brown's Body,'" said Martha; "it's a good march. Now, begin!"

"Does it have to rhyme?" interrupted Nan.

"Not on the first try," laughed Martha; "now everybody sing Tum-te-tum — till we get some words.

"We are-re sixteen drowned Scouts at march,
Don't ever ask us how we got to be this way!
With a water spout-out here-re and a brooklet there
And a gulf and a sea in air."

"How does that come out, girls?"

"Fine and dandy!" exclaimed Margy; "it *almost* fits the tune! Now let's do it again, and then you make a chorus, Martie, when we come to it."

So the verse was sung in unison, and what it lacked in meter it gained in enthusiasm, so

nobody missed anything serious. When the chorus was reached Martha sang:

"Cheer, oh, cheer, girls, for the water!
Cheer, cheer, oh, cheer, girls, for the water!
Cheer, oh, cheer, girls, for the water! —
We'll never get home dry!"

"That last sentiment is a safe bet," said Margy heartily as an extra gust of rain splashed on her hat and streamed off down her shoes.

"Here's Main Street. Now, everybody sing!" shouted Peggy. And if ever a funny sight was seen in that village, it was when eighteen dripping feminine figures marched singing through the streets of the town, dripping, soaked, and — happy!

XX

AN UNEXPECTED TEA PARTY

If the last mile between the village and camp seemed a little tiresome and heavy, no one said a word about it. But it could be noticed that, when the marching girls came in sight of camp, home seemed to look good to every dripping girl.

"What's the matter with camp?" shouted Phil from her place near the front of the line.

"It's all right — if it's dry!" responded Nan.

"Imagine anything on earth being dry, to-day!" exclaimed Margy scornfully. "Why, I would n't feel natural, dry. I've returned to my native state — were n't we all fishes or something — once?"

"Don't mix biology and camping, sweetheart," warned Peggy; "this is vacation!"

A call from Mr. Welles's house, which the girls were now passing, turned the attention of all in that direction.

"Come in this way," called Mrs. Welles, from a safe and dry post on the porch.

"Oh, you have n't an idea how wet we are!" exclaimed Miss Shaw. "You won't want us even on your walks!"

"Much you know about it!" laughed Mrs. Welles hospitably, "when I've been standing here an hour watching for you. Those poor girls will catch their death of cold — "

"Oh, it's a warm rain," said Miss Shaw comfortably.

"And we're going in swimming in a minute to take off the dust," added Martha.

"You're going to do no such thing," replied Mrs. Welles firmly; "you're coming right into my house and get dry!"

"But, Aunt Nell," cried Martha, "see how we look! We'd ruin your rugs and floors, and, anyway, the last thing mother made me promise was that we were not to bother you a bit."

"Who said you were bothering?" laughed Mrs. Welles. "Now, you let me manage this. All go around to the west side of the house and go into the basement entrance. Martha, you know where that old shower we used to use is? Well, strip off those wet clothes, every one of you, and take a shower. Some of you can go over to camp and get dry things while others get started at the showering. Then leave the

wet things hanging there to dry, and come up the inside stairs and visit with me. Now, hurry!"

That programme sounded so good to the wet, tired trampers that Miss Shaw and Martha had n't the heart to object. So the party dripped around to the basement entrance and went inside. There, on the cement floor, wet clothes could be left without doing damage.

Peggy, Jack, Polly, and Betty went over to the tents for dry clothes for the crowd, and Martha took charge of the showers because she knew the "lay of the land" in the basement.

Inside of an hour all eighteen campers were showered, dried, dressed, and more or less primped up as to hair and general tidiness. So they went upstairs to the big living-room, not forgetting to hang up all the wet clothes on long lines stretched in the drying-room of the big basement.

"Oh, but this does look jolly!" cried Nan as she spied the piled-up fire and the comfortable chairs. "A rainy day is fun out of doors, but for real sport give me a fire and an easy-chair."

"Yes, grandma," mimicked Margy, "it certainly must be acceptable to your enfeebled condition. For *my* part, I'd rather dance."

"Listen to the child," groaned Peggy; "can't you let us sit down a minute?"

"Yes, she can and she's going to," announced Mrs. Welles; "you may dance later, up on the third floor, if you like. But now you're all going to have tea with me." And she swung open the French doors of the dining-room and pulled in a loaded tea cart.

There was tea for every one, and sandwiches and cakes and cookies and nuts and candies.

"I just don't see why you are so good to us!" exclaimed Polly rapturously. "I love our camp cooking, but, oh, dear! *did* you ever taste anything as good as this junk?"

"Never!" agreed Peggy; "and don't worry, Polly, none of us will ever tell your mother that you called Mrs. Welles's lovely tea-things 'junk' — will we, girls?"

"I love your jam," said Phyllis, who seemed to have a feeling that a change of subject might not be a bad idea. "I never ate any so delicious — is n't it raspberry?"

"Wild raspberry," corrected Mrs. Welles. "I think the flavor is a little different from the cultivated berry, though I may just imagine it. The woods around here are full of berries. I noticed yesterday that they're about ready for picking — the season seems a bit early this year."

"You mean berries for making this marvelous jam grow *wild* here, so near Chicago?" asked Jacqueline in surprise.

"Surely," laughed Mrs. Welles; "we're not so citified as you seem to think!"

"Oh, would n't you love to get lost in the woods and have nothing to eat and find berries and all!" sighed Polly.

"Well, for my part," admitted Peggy, "I could stand being lost all right, but I'd rather find a lovely lady who offered me jam sandwiches and tea than all your old berries, *I* would!"

"Girls!" exclaimed Martha suddenly," why don't we make some jam to-morrow? That is," she added thoughtfully, "if there are enough berries for us to have some too. And if jam is good fresh — yes, I'm sure it is."

"That's a brilliant idea," said Mrs. Welles; "there are plenty of berries and jam would be delicious for your meals."

"But we ought to buy them from you — they're from your land," said Phyllis.

"Fiddlesticks!" laughed Mrs. Welles.

"I'll tell you what we might do," suggested Jack. "We could pick on shares. Mrs. Welles wants some for jam, so we could do the picking and get some berries for pay."

"Such a head for business," said Mr. Welles, who had come in a short time before. "If I don't watch out you'll be getting my place, on shares or something."

"Why bother to get it when we already have it!" laughed Peggy. "Seems to me we have everything we want out here; why pay taxes?"

"Another good business head," said Mr. Welles. "You ought to go into the jam business to work off energy."

"Oh, girls," exclaimed Phil, "let's!"

"Let's what?" asked Margy, who had n't been listening very carefully; "never do what Phil says till you're sure what it is — that's my motto."

"Then you need n't, Miss 'Fraidy," retorted Phil, "but the rest of us will — we're going into the jam business, girls," she announced to the whole roomful of girls.

"Who makes the jam?" asked Nan.

"Who sells it?" asked Polly.

"Who buys it — that's what I want to know?" asked Martha.

"*We* make the jam," said Phil, who, once she had an idea, could always work out a plan in record time, "*we* sell the jam, and whoever is lucky, buys it. You know we wanted money to start some hospital work in the home for crippled children this fall," she added seriously. "Well, here's our chance. We can buy sugar and glasses and pick berries in the woods, and then, when we go home, we can have a jam sale and make some money."

"Over by the traction line," volunteered Mrs. Welles, "there are a lot of wild strawberries, too. They make marvelous jam."

"Other good ideas, come right 'long," said Phil as she waved her hand.

"I really think that is an idea," said Miss Shaw thoughtfully.

"Now, Miss Shaw," laughed Margy, "you never came in on such a freight train before."

"Not a freight train now," replied Miss Shaw, nothing daunted; "merely the observation platform of your own express. I had

to see all sides of the question before I was sure. I believe we can do it."

"Then let's appoint committees," suggested Martha. "Some will have to go to the village for glasses and sugar. Some will have to study up how to make jam — won't you tell us how you did yours, Aunt Nell? And some will have to have charge of the picking — though we'll all want to help with that jolly job."

"My part is easily done," said Mrs. Welles; "I can tell you now. Wash and measure the berries. Take equal parts of berries and sugar. Toss berries in sugar till mixed. Set over a slow fire till juice draws, then boil briskly for exactly eight minutes and pour into glasses. Of course you have to cook a small amount of berries, not more than three cupfuls, at a time to get fine results. See how easy it is?"

"Sounds awfully easy," agreed Phyllis, "and we ought to be able to do it on our own camp stove."

"I'm sure you can," said Mrs. Welles; "and you city girls who have n't done canning, such as most farm girls your age have done, ought to have experience just like this. I'll come around when you do the first

lot and you can ask questions if you like."

"Oh, will you!" said Phil happily; "then I *know* we can do it."

"I'll go to the village to-morrow," volunteered Nan, "because I know I'm going to run out of films and stamps, anyway; who'll go along?"

"Better make it about four girls," advised Miss Shaw, "for glasses and sugar weigh something and you'll want company to share the load."

Mrs. Welles handed out pencil and paper and committees were made and a list of supplies written down.

"Sugar — had n't we better start with ten pounds, or maybe fifteen?" asked Phil.

"Let's make it fifteen," said Peggy ambitiously.

"And glasses," continued Martha, "that's all we need, is n't it?"

"Paraffin to melt over the jam, you know," Phil reminded her. "Of course, seeing it's for selling, we'd better get tin covers, but, even so, a thin coating of paraffin would be worth while, would n't it, Mrs. Welles?" she asked.

"By all means, yes," Mrs. Welles assured her; "and that will be all you need. Now,

girls, this is all very interesting, but you know I did n't ask you here for a business meeting. This is a tea party. Mr. Welles has started the Vic upstairs, and if you want to dance — "

"Hurrah for dancing!" exclaimed Margy; "have the first with me, Mart? Come on, girls!"

And with a rush the living-room was deserted, business forgotten for the moment, and the girls dashed up the broad stairway for more fun.

XXI

THE JAM BUSINESS

The next morning there was a busy stir and bustle in camp as the girls got at the business of the day. Nan very early marshaled her group off to the village in the hope that they would be back in plenty of time for the fun of picking berries with the crowd. Phil, in conference with the head gardener, was making a new top to the stove that would better take care of such particular business as the making of jam for sale. Morning chores were done in double-quick time, and, before anybody had dared to hope for such luck, everything was ready and the start to the woods was made. Buckets, small boxes, and botany cases were to hold the berries, and every girl had been warned about needless crushing of the tender fruit which would waste the precious juices.

"A short march won't hurt us," suggested Miss Shaw as they started west; "let's tramp along the traction line and see if the straw-

berries are worth picking. Mr. Welles was n't sure."

For a time not a single wild strawberry was seen, then, quite suddenly the girls came upon a big patch, the scarlet berries hiding modestly under the broad leaves nearly concealing them entirely.

"Oh, the darlings!" exclaimed Phil rapturously; "let 's eat some!"

"If you eat a berry," said Martha sternly, "you 'll get sent back to camp and put in the guard-house."

"Oh, Martie, you could n't be so cruel-hearted," teased Jack, "when you know you 're just dying to taste one yourself."

"Well," laughed Martha, "that 's the first time anybody ever took me so seriously! What I really meant was, if you eat *many* berries."

"Your apology is accepted, Miss Harding," said Jack, as she ate two of the best berries in sight. "Now, girls, *don't* overeat — I beg of you!"

"How can we with you around to eat first?" asked Margy.

"Remember the jam business, girls," suggested Nan, "and pick a *few* while you feast."

"Our bark is worse than our bite," said Phil hastily; "see, I have some in my box — berries I mean," she added hurriedly, as she saw Margy about to interrupt, "not barks."

"*How* you relieve my mind," sighed Margy; "I was *so* worried!"

"I just picture *you* worried about anything, Marg," laughed Nan.

"Then, for Heaven's sake, tell mother," suggested Margy; "she thinks I don't worry enough."

"Somebody shut that child up and make her work," ordered Peggy. "Let's some of us go on to the woods, so as not to get in each other's way as we pick."

That seemed a fine idea, so the party divided, some staying to pick the wild strawberries and others going on into the woods for raspberries.

The strawberry patch was very soon cleaned out, and, when it was, the girls took their berries back to camp, only a short walk, emptied them on platters, and covered them with netting to keep the flies off. Then they joined the raspberry pickers farther along in the woods.

By ten o'clock every box and case was full

and all the visible berries were picked. The girls were just talking of going back to begin cooking when some children from the village, armed with buckets, came into the woods.

"Got all the berries?" asked the boy; "I was 'fraid we'd be too late."

"Sorry," said Martha, "but we picked all we could find."

"Where you been?" asked the boy; "save us hunting if we know."

"Oh," said Martha, "we've been here and here and there," pointing to the various clumps where the girls had picked fruit.

"You have n't picked there, have you?" exclaimed the biggest girl, as she pointed with dismay to the biggest clump of bushes Martha had included in her gesture.

"Surely!" replied Martha, "why not?"

"'Cause it's full of chiggers," retorted the girl briefly, "and every one of you'll get 'em — bet you got 'em now!" she added in dire prophecy.

"Oh, girls!" cried Peggy in dismay, "do you suppose we have?"

"Mother just said she knew we'd get something!" exclaimed Nan.

"And Bob said chiggers were the worst

ever," added Jack dolefully; "he knows because he's had 'em."

"Well, what do we care about a few chiggers?" questioned Betty.

"Wait till morning and you'll find out what you care!" prophesied Nan.

"Oh, wait," exclaimed Martha suddenly; "I've read something — "

"So have I," retorted Margy, "many times, but it never takes."

"But I've read what to do for chiggers," insisted Martha, "and I know what it is! You take a bath in tar soap and change your clothes."

"Press the button for my maid, Peggy," said Margy languidly, "and tell her to draw my baaath."

"Would n't the lake do as well?" suggested Jack wickedly; "it's nearer."

"Let's dash home," said Martha, who had been thinking hard about her idea, "and rig up some scheme for taking tar-soap showers. We ought to be smart enough to figure out a way of doing it."

"Yes, we ought to be," agreed Phil, "but are we?"

"I have tar soap in the first-aid kit, if that's any comfort," said Miss Gilbert.

"Now, then, if we had a rubber hose — " mused Martha. "Girls! I have the idea! We'll get a hose from the gardener and we'll use our tent flaps for curtains. Then we'll take turns holding the hose and holding the curtains and taking the showers. Not a person in this camp's going to have chigger bites — you'll see!"

Her enthusiasm was contagious, and the girls ran home at top speed eager to try the jolly plan.

In fifteen minutes Martha, with the help of Nan and Peggy, had rigged up a shower bath of the tent flaps connecting the hose with their own water supply. Each girl was given a piece of soap and ordered to soap herself thoroughly. Then in turn they stood under the cold shower and washed and scrubbed.

"That ought to do something," said Phil as she got back into clean clothes — no girl was allowed to put on a single garment she had worn into the berry patch. "Now for making jam."

By this time it was eleven o'clock, and, if jam was to be made that morning, it had to be started. Polly put the kettle on to sterilize the glasses, Betty with three aides picked over

and washed the berries, Phil and Mrs. Welles got out measuring cups, pans, and ladles, and the work began.

Making jam for sale is no joke. It's good fun, but it's business as the girls seemed to realize, for there was little talking and joking till many glasses of finished jam stood on the table away from the fire.

"We ought to make pretty labels to paste on the glasses, so we can tell which is strawberry and which is raspberry," suggested Betty as, their work all finished, the girls who had picked over berries looked with pride on the row of finished jam.

"Let's do that this afternoon," suggested Polly. "Joe, you can always make something pretty, you make a design and we'll copy it, and Phil can make flour paste, I'm sure, and we'll make them look attractive."

"Where you going to keep them till we go home?" asked Nan.

"Better put them in my cellar," suggested Mrs. Welles; "of course, if you were 'way off in the wilds, you could fix up a cupboard where they'd be safe and dry, but, as my cellar is so handy, why bother?"

At that minute Mr. Welles, his nose in air

scenting the luscious smell of cooking fruit, came around to view.

"Something tells me there is cooking going on," he said.

"How queer that you should guess," laughed Jack.

"Does anything tell me that eating is going on?" he added.

"I should say it does *not!*" exclaimed Phil as, flushed and hot, she set a last panful of jam on the stove. "That has to draw the juice and then boil eight minutes and then be poured into glasses before the cook even *thinks* of food."

"But if it's any comfort to you," confided Martha, "we'll give you our first glass of jam — that one," she added, pointing to a beautiful ruby-colored glass of warm jam.

"*Give* it to me?" demanded Mr. Welles. "It's plain you girls are not good enough business women to ever be worried about your income taxes! *Give* it to me! I'll *buy* it, if you please! And be proud of the honor of being your first customer. What's the price?"

"We don't know yet," said Peggy; "we'd better figure it out."

"That does sound like a good idea,"

laughed Mr. Welles; "go ahead and figure."

After a few minutes' session with pencil and paper the girls announced that the jam ought to sell for twenty-five cents, and that a little more than two thirds of that amount would be clear profit for the hospital.

"Good enough!" approved Mr. Welles. "Here 's your quarter. And thank you for letting me buy the first glassful."

That meant appointing a treasurer of the jam fund, and, by the time the girls had the business end of the affair organized, Phil had the jam off the stove and plans for dinner under way.

"How soon may we swim?" asked Peggy, who had missed the morning sport in the water in spite of the shower and the soap scrub. "I'll forget how to ride a log if we don't get in to-day."

"You shall have your swim to-day," laughed Miss Shaw; "don't worry a minute about that. I want to go as much as you do. I think we'll be through with dinner work by one-thirty. That will leave an hour for letters or rest and then swimming at two-thirty. Plenty of time and sunshine for all the log-riding you want to do."

"I may be around after four," suggested Mr. Welles, as the dinner gong at the house called him away; "no telling, we might think up some fun."

But as he spoke, he little guessed what the camp would be doing that afternoon, after the swim!

XXII

THE WRECK ON THE NORTHWESTERN

"What do you say that we play out that tie for championship in doubles?" asked Peggy as the girls finished dressing after the swim.

"Suits me," replied Martha. "I feel so energetic you'd better make up your mind you're going to be defeated, young lady."

"Really, now," laughed Leslie, "you'll have to play well to beat Peggy and me even if you did make a tie game before."

"Hear that, Nan?" demanded Martha; "for that let's make them play six love sets."

"Watch us!" agreed Nan.

"Love sets! What a joke!" retorted Leslie.

"It's plain to see you children need an umpire," suggested Margy. "Methinks I'll go along and keep score in the interests of fair play."

"Come ahead, Marg," invited Nan. "You'll look ornamental at the side lines even if you can't add."

"Is that *so?*" said Margy. "Far be it from me to remind you of my recent mark in Math!"

"Please don't," begged Nan, "'cause then I'd have to think of my own, and I like to avoid painful subjects. Get my racket, will you, Mart? It's right by yours."

"Come on, let's go," said Peggy, and she sauntered over toward the tennis courts.

Before the group of girls had gone a dozen steps, there was a resounding crash that brought them to a halt and startled every one within hearing.

"It's over there!" exclaimed Peggy. "It's a wreck."

"Oh, goody, I always wanted to see a wreck!" exclaimed Leslie happily.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Les!" retorted Nan. "You talk like a murderous wretch!"

"Which I am not, as you know," replied Leslie. "Only if there is a wreck, I want to see it first thing. Do you suppose it'll be messy?"

"Why ask me? I don't know," laughed Margy, and she, along with the others, started running in the direction of the crash.

Along the path toward the railroad they went, up the embankment on to the track.

Sure enough, about three hundred yards down the track to the east, a piled-up mass of

what appeared to be freight cars lay over the double tracks.

"Miss Shaw, it's a wreck!" called Martha, glancing back to the campers who were coming up behind. "We're going!"

"Don't go too close," warned Miss Shaw.

"We won't," replied Martha, "but we do want to see everything! Maybe we can help."

"Pass the word on back to camp," suggested Peggy.

"Back to camp," laughed Nan; "camp's here!" And she was right. Nobody had time to actually count noses, but apparently every girl in camp was running down the track not so very far behind the first group.

When they reached the scene of the wreck, they found enough excitement and damage to suit even Leslie. Many questions and some observation seemed to bring out the fact that a train of old cars being hauled to the scrap-yard, some five miles east, had some way or other run off the track — cause not as yet known. And this had happened right in front of a through freight going west. In some miraculous manner the engineer and fireman had escaped, so no one was hurt.

"Of course I'm glad they're not," said

Leslie; "but would n't it have been lovely if they had been and if we could have given first aid and had our pictures in the paper! I can just see the headlines now — 'Charming young lady gave effective help.'"

"Much you know about writing 'heads,'" laughed Peggy. "You ought to work on the *Grant High News* and you'd find out that headlines are no place for adjectives, me darling!"

"And maybe our pictures," continued Leslie, " and a reporter to interview us."

"If that engineer knew the unhappiness he made in your young life by saving his neck," said Margy solemnly, "no life insurance company would give him insurance!"

"Well, you seem to know," laughed Nan.

"Girls," interrupted Polly, "they're going to get a wrecking train with a thing on a crane and everything."

"Then I want to see the 'thing on a crane and everything,'" said Margy; "sounds as good as a matinée. Let's get front seats. If that bank up there isn't covered with poison ivy — and I think it isn't — it would make a perfect grandstand seat."

The girls, following Margy's suggestion,

dashed up the bank, found fairly comfortable quarters from which they could see everything on the tracks below. They saw the flagmen run back to set signals and another man from the car run to the nearest telegraph office, in sight down the track to the east, where, no doubt, he sent for aid.

"It will be days before any train goes by here," said Betty, as she looked at the mess below.

"Much you know about railroading," laughed Polly. "I'll bet they have the track clear to-night."

"To-night!" exclaimed Leslie; "then they'll have to work hard."

"That's just what they're doing," said Peggy.

"What will they do with their suburban traffic?" asked Martha as she bethought herself of the many trains from the city soon due.

"Heaven knows!" laughed Polly; "I'm not a railroad man."

"The first suburban express is due in ten minutes," said Martha as she glanced at her watch. "They 'll have to stop it in the village."

"Look, girls!" exclaimed Joe; "there's the wrecking train now!"

"They got it here pretty quickly," said Leslie. And the suburban train was completely forgotten in the interest made by watching the great wrecking car, with its powerful crane, make its start toward clearing the tracks of the wreckage.

From their safe perch above the level of the tracks, the girls could see everything, and yet they were not in the least in the way.

"I think they had it made to order here for us," commented Peggy as she realized how much they were able to see.

Others besides themselves found the hill a point of vantage, too, and ere long they had plenty of company.

But it was n't till Martha noticed a woman behind her say, "How we'll ever get to Wheaton is more than I know!" that any of the Scouts really noticed the many people around them.

"Look up the track!" suddenly exclaimed Nan as she happened to notice the changed view off to the east.

While the girls had been absorbed in the work of the wrecking train right in front of them, things had been happening at the end of the great freight. The first west-bound

suburban express had arrived; had been stopped just before it came up to the freight. No doubt many of its passengers were among the crowds which now lined the tracks. Behind it stood another suburban train, and still farther away could be seen another train, just coming to a standstill.

"Was n't it thoughtful of me to provide a wreck for you to watch!" said Mr. Welles's voice, and the girls turned to see him standing by them.

"Those people seem to think it would be thoughtful of the railroad to get them home," laughed Martha. "One woman just asked me if I knew where to get a machine to drive to Wheaton — I must look like a garage."

"I wish *I* looked like a garage — anything as rich as that!" said Polly. "A Johnny-on-the-spot garage would make a small fortune in this crowd of hungry-wish-I-was-home folks."

"Why turn down a fortune?" asked Mr. Welles.

"Turn it down?" exclaimed Polly. "Me? You don't know me, Mr. Welles! If our own car was here, little Polly would be busy running folks around at fifty cents per person."

"Listen to the lady," said Mr. Welles, "when

she knows perfectly well I have *two* cars in the garage."

"But they're not mine," laughed Polly.

"Is she a good driver, Miss Shaw?" asked Mr. Welles.

"If my judgment is worth anything, yes," said Miss Shaw.

"Then how would you like to take my car and be a chauffeur for an hour?" asked Mr. Welles.

"And make more money for the hospital fund?" asked Polly eagerly, her eyes shining with sudden excitement.

"Exactly; only you had better not lose much time," agreed Mr. Welles. "Anybody else here a good driver?" he added.

"Les and Jack both drive," suggested Martha.

"Then they may take turns," said Mr. Welles. "Polly shall have the big car first because she started the idea. Martha, go with them so Tom knows it's all right. Let Polly have the big car and you girls flip a penny for the jitney. Then in an hour you can have a grand change."

"And hurry, girls," Nan warned them, for as treasurer of the jam fund she had hopes of getting wealth for the troop.

Polly needed no urging. As soon as Mr. Welles finished his directions, she had started on a run for his home, and she reached the garage before the other girls caught up with her. By the time Martha arrived to tell Tom that the cars were to be sent out, Polly had the big car in the driveway and the engine chugging ready to go.

"Would you take passengers for Wheaton, Mart?" she asked as Martha ran up to the car.

"I'd take near-by ones first if you can," advised Martha; "you can charge fifty cents for a short run and make more."

"Unless you load up a whole car for Wheaton at a dollar per," suggested Jack.

"Would that be profiteering?" suggested Martha; "it sounds like a good deal of money."

"That's less for the distance than Chicago taxi rates," Leslie reminded her, "and there ought to be something allowed for the convenience of having us around."

"And then we want to figure mileage so we can pay Mr. Welles for the gas we use," said Polly. "Mart, will you look at that speedometer there? I can't see it from here. Write it down, so there will be no mistake. Wish me luck, everybody!" And she was gone.

A half-minute later, Jack dashed off behind her in the jitney that was used for supplies.

"I'll be back in an hour and you can take your turn then, if Polly is n't back, Les," she called as she turned east and drove toward the crossing.

Martha and Leslie hurried back to the bank by the wreck to report to the other girls that the two chauffeurs were off; that gasoline was to be paid for, and that they had hopes of making a lot of money for the fund.

"I wish I could drive!" exclaimed Tips longingly. "They'll have a bushel of fun, to say nothing of the experiences."

Her wish was echoed by every girl there, for it sounded very jolly to be driving wrecked suburbanites over the country.

Till long past the regular supper hour the girls watched the wreck. Then, as the tracks were nearly clear, pangs of hunger got the better of curiosity and the Scouts turned for camp.

Jacqueline and Tom, in the garage, reported that the girls had been in once and that Leslie was now driving the big car and Polly the jitney.

"And they're doing a wonderful business!"

exclaimed Jack. "I took in twelve dollars myself, and Polly had more. The way she packs in that big car is a wonder. She tells 'em they don't want so many to crowd in — and then, of course, a crowd is exactly what they think they have to have. She had nine dollar passengers in one load to Wheaton — what do you think about that?"

"I think Polly has a good business head," said Martha loyally, "that's what I think."

At that minute the two cars turned into the yard and the campers ran pellmell to get the latest news.

"Eighteen-fifty, for my loads," shouted Polly.

"Fifteen-seventy-five for mine!" shouted Leslie.

"Girls!" exclaimed Nan, "can you add that high? Sounds as though we had been robbing a bank!"

"Sounds as though we had been working, you mean," laughed Leslie, as she wiped her dusty face. "With all that rain the other day, I thought it never would be dusty again."

"But *think!*" exclaimed Martha rapturously; "think of all the money we have! We can buy goods to sew and give cash when we want to,

and *everything!* Is n't it just too wonderful for words!"

"While you're thinking," said Polly, trying her best to make herself heard above the happy hubbub, "please do try to think that we have n't had any supper!"

"You poor child," exclaimed Phil. "Girls, let's raid the cupboard and give 'em a spread!"

"*Um-my!*" said Polly, "the motion is carried!"

XXIII

TEA AT FOUR

"I NEVER did see time go so fast!" exclaimed Nan, as the last morning chore was finished on Saturday morning. "We've done about a quarter of what we planned to do."

"That's because you planned too much," said Miss Shaw. "You've surely done enough since Tuesday morning to satisfy even an ambitious Scout. Just count up now and see."

"Well," began Nan, "we took our long hike, and we've been in swimming every day but that rainy day."

"And even then we had a tea party and got an idea, so you could n't call it a wasted day," said Peggy.

"Indeed you could n't," agreed Leslie.

"And everybody has done a lot toward her own proficiency medal, so we can have as many tests as Miss Shaw can give us Monday morning," said Martha; "and that means work done, you know."

"And letters home," Betty reminded them. "My family did n't expect a line, and here I've

written every day — it's having a regular time for writing that does the business."

"Are you going to forget the jam and the chauffing and all our hard-earned cash?" asked Polly.

"And the tennis tournament," added Tips.

"By jingoes!" exclaimed Margy. "Did we forget that final match? We were all so excited about it yesterday and then the wreck made us forget."

"Well, we don't have a wreck every day, goodness knows," said Martha, "and Nan and I can win that match any time."

"Is that so?" answered Leslie. "May we play it off right now, Miss Shaw? I feel in such a winning mood!"

"Now would be a fine time," replied Miss Shaw. "We'll all go along and watch. Then, with that settled, we can make other plans for the day."

"It won't take long," said Leslie darkly. "We'll soon beat 'em."

"You know what goes after pride like *that!*" Nan reminded her. "Watch the score, girls! Somebody's going to get beautifully beaten!"

But just who that somebody was remained in doubt for a long time. The score ran 2 to 3, 3 to

3, 3 to 4, and so on up to 8 to 8, and there it seemed destined to stick, for the game was deuce in and deuce out, deuce in and deuce out, while the players dripped perspiration and the spectators yelled themselves hoarse.

Suddenly Leslie made a beautiful return, landing the ball *just* over the net. Nan was defending the back courts and Martha was forward, but on the other side from where the ball landed. It seemed impossible for her to reach the ball in time to get it back. Nan made a wild dash and Martha a running drive. Of course Martha reached it first, and just barely in the nick of time returned it, placing it in the opposite corner, close to the net, where it could n't be returned.

"That was luck!" she exclaimed breathlessly. " I did n't really know where to place it; I only thought of getting it over!"

But luck or no luck, it won the point, and with it the game and the set.

"You gave 'em a good fight," said Margy admiringly; and all four girls were praised — it had been beautiful playing.

"I wish that chigger-shower thing was working, I'm wet as water!" exclaimed Leslie.

"We *did n't* get any chiggers as we really by

right were to, did we?" said Peggy. "That shower and tar soap was a fine idea. We must remember it."

"Why don't you take your swim early this morning?" suggested Miss Shaw. "Then you'll have plenty of time for afternoon plans and you'll feel refreshed. It's so hot that you can go as well now as later."

That idea appealed, so the campers changed into swimming-clothes and took their daily ducking and log-riding.

"When do we eat?" asked Polly an hour and a half later; "that's what interests me — I'm hollow!"

"A lot of good that hint will do you," said Nan cruelly. Nan was cook for the day, and she knew how much work had to be done before dinner.

"Do you mean to say that we have to wait till *you* cook grub?" demanded Margy. "Oh, Phil, have mercy on us and help! Even *I* will help."

"Then you never *will* get anything to eat," prophesied Betty.

"Child, you should speak respectfully to your elders," said Margy solemnly. "Know you not that you speak to a college woman?"

"She means, if she passed her exams, you do," said Leslie.

"Well, my chance of passing exams is better than your chance of getting food this minute," replied Margy. "There isn't a thing in the larder for piecing, and I happen to know that the nearest food will take thirty minutes of cooking — and the fire isn't started."

The honk of a motor horn at the driveway sent the girls scurrying to see who was coming, and there, in the taxi from the village, were Mr. Loring and Mr. and Mrs. Harding, and (no less interesting and delightful) baskets and bundles piled high in blissful confusion.

"Did you think we'd let the whole week go by without coming out?" asked Mrs. Harding. "Now don't get excited," she added laughingly. "We know we weren't expected before afternoon, but we're going to lunch at the house and we'll call on you later."

"But we thought maybe somebody would eat up some of this stuff," added Mr. Loring.

"This stuff" proved to be baskets of apricots and watermelons which Mr. Loring and Mr. Harding had begun to unload.

"May we eat it right now?" asked Peggy. "We're starved, and you know we learned in

Home Ec that the American people do not eat enough fruit."

"Well, I think that portion of the American public represented here will have enough fruit for the morning," laughed Mr. Loring. "Eat, my dear ladies, there's a store at the village when this supply is gone."

"My life is saved!" exclaimed Polly, happily, as she passed around a basket of luscious apricots Mr. Loring handed her.

"We'd better get busy putting camp in shape for afternoon," suggested Peggy a few minutes later. "We don't want to leave too much to do for after dinner—more folks may come early."

On Wednesday evening Miss Shaw and the girls had realized that many fathers and mothers would like the fun of seeing the girls in camp — not to mention brothers and sisters who might want to come along. So it was planned that cards should be mailed the next morning, early, inviting families to come for tea Saturday afternoon at four. But in order that the affair might remain very simple, the captain had ordered that no plans be made till Saturday morning. That was the reason why the party had been, apparently, neglected. But neglected it was no

longer. Every girl began to talk at once and to decide what should be done.

"Let's tidy everything up so it looks ship-shape," suggested Tips.

"And have wonderful things to eat," said Polly.

"And lots of good punch to drink," added Nan.

"And party dresses and everything, so they won't know we're in the woods," added Margy sarcastically.

"Silly!" retorted Leslie. "We could n't hide the woods if we wanted to and we don't want to."

But when they actually settled down to making committees, it was found that there was n't as much to do as first appeared. Camp was put in perfect order every morning, and there was not a thing extra to be done for company inspection. It would n't take long to prepare the juices from the fruits the commissary department had ordered the day before, and dainty sandwiches could be made immediately after dinner and packed away in oiled paper and well wrapped in damp towels.

"But what ever'll they drink the stuff out

of!" exclaimed Peggy. "We have n't but our eighteen cups!"

"Never fear," said Miss Shaw; "a little thing like that does n't bother us. Remember that good pattern for paper cups we saw and said we would remember?"

Of course the girls did.

"Two of you can hike to the village and get some good paper — tablets will do. And then we can fold the sheets into cups and have enough for everybody."

With their usual good business methods, the patrols were subdivided into committees for work, but the girls were careful not to assign any immediate task to any member of the cooking squad. It would be a shame, with plenty of able-bodied, willing girls around wanting to work, to interfere with dinner even for a minute!

By three o'clock the dinner work was out of the way, the camp set in perfect order, food and drink ready for guests, and every girl cleaned and primped and ready for inspection.

"Is n't this just the prettiest place you ever saw!" exclaimed Peggy as she looked around the camp with critical eye. "Those daisies make the perfect finishing touch!"

Indeed, the camp, nestled down between the two woods, did make a lovely picture. To the west the thick trees made a solid background of green; to the north was a vista across the road, over meadow and hill to the distant horizon; to the south, across the tracks, were the rolling links of a golf club; and to the east the sharply cut edges of wooded hills, cut off by the gravel excavations, gave a touch of gray to the picture. In the little pocket-like valley thus formed nestled the camp, surrounded on all sides by trees, fresh grass, and countless white daisies in full glory of their June-time bloom.

But there was no time for admiration and picture-gazing. The three-ten train whistled and the whole crowd of girls rushed to the tiny station in the hope that kinfolk and maybe a few friends would get off the afternoon local. They were not disappointed. The crowd that got off that train would keep any camp of girls busy doing the honors! There were fathers and mothers and younger brothers and sisters and — strange that this did n't disappoint the girls a bit! — four older brothers, two of them C men from the university.

After that the hubbub of fun and excitement spread over the camp. Polly and Betty took Polly's two younger brothers to the gravel pit where the boys were anxious to play "pirate" in the caves made by the gravel-diggers; older folk separated into small groups, and were taken on inspection tours of the camp and near-by woods, and the college men made themselves generally popular by giving devoted attention to so many girls that nobody felt really left out.

At four, Betty blew the call to mess, and ice-cold punch and sandwiches were passed around from the camp table.

"It's lucky we made a lot more than we thought we'd want!" exclaimed Margy in a housewifely aside. "Pass some more sandwiches to Bob, Nan."

"Pass them yourself," retorted Nan teasingly. "Can't you see that's what he wants?"

"Silly!" exclaimed Margy, but she passed the sandwich basket just the same, and nobody noticed that Bob blindly took four at one helping.

"You people certainly don't make *little* sandwiches," he said as he took a bite of all four at once.

"Maybe you would find them a better size if you tried eating one at a time," suggested Margy, with an air of innocence, as she suddenly noticed the pile he held in his hand.

"Just look at that!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Well, anyway, they're good!"

"What do we do next?" asked George. "Any chance for tennis? You know we're hard-working citizens this summer, Mart. Bob has a job in an office, Bill's working in Field's basement — can you beat that? — and I leave to-night for camp. Going to be a counselor and have charge of the babies — the boys of eight and nine who are away from 'mamma' for the first time. 'Doc' thinks I have a 'way with kids' — hence the job."

"Honestly, George?" exclaimed Martha. "Are n't you a working person, though!"

"Indeed I am!" replied George.

"To be sure, we can play tennis," volunteered Peggy; "and the volley-ball net's up if somebody wants to try that."

The tea party was a success in every way, and when the five-thirty-seven eastbound whistled for Gravel Oaks, a group of delighted parents and families said good-bye and left for home carrying with them armfuls of

daisies and happy memories of a charming afternoon.

"Just think!" exclaimed Martha as the train disappeared out of sight and the girls turned back to camp, "this is Saturday evening. And Tuesday we go back home!"

"Don't you wish camp would last forever 'n' ever!" cried Betty fervently

"That's a large order, honey," laughed Nan, "but I do wish it would last a long, long time!"

"Well, we've three days yet," Phil reminded them.

"And I wonder what will happen those three days?" said Leslie. "I hope it's something jolly that we never would plan!"

As the girls walked back through the daisies in the June sunshine, they little guessed how perfectly Leslie's wish was to be answered.

XXIV

UNEXPECTED VISITORS AT CAMP

SUNDAY, with its quiet hour for reading aloud poetry and essays that the girls loved, but too seldom took time to enjoy; its early tea and long tramp in the twilight to see the moon rise from the hill-top to the north, passed restfully by, and Monday morning found the girls eager for any sort of fun. Next morning they would have to break camp, and they felt they must crowd into this one final day all the fun and work and games and swimming that they could n't have, together, during the rest of the summer.

First in the order of the day — after the camp chores were done, to be sure — was an exhibit of work done for flower books. Betty and Margy had nearly completed their collections and had really beautiful books. Tips did n't have so large a collection, but by hard work later she might hope to catch up. Nan had "killed two birds with one stone" by working at flowers with her camera, and, along with her collection of pretty camp and

woods photographs, she had made a splendid collection of blue-prints of wild flowers. Martha, who had n't a camera and so was n't "going in" for photography just yet, had bought a printing-frame and blue-print paper at the village drug-store, and had made a collection of prints of flowers, too. This the girls found a splendid way to keep a record of flowers, for, while a collection of pressed flowers is interesting to look at, it becomes dry and brittle in time and is likely to be spoiled. The blue-prints, on the other hand, if perfectly washed and dried, stay pretty always.

The books and sheets of pressed flowers were spread out on the mess table and received very careful inspection.

"I know what I'm going to do up north this summer," said Polly as she looked admiringly at the display. "I'm going to make a collection like this. There are wonderful marsh flowers up in northern Wisconsin, and I know I can make an interesting book."

"In the swamp back of our camp." suggested Margy, "there are lovely pitcher plants. I don't know how in the world to press them, but I'm going to start a collection and see what happens."

"Would n't trees be interesting to study?" suggested Peggy. "I don't know trees at all! I'll get some bark and a leaf of each tree I find."

"You ought to take a picture, too, and make your collection complete while you're about it," said Nan.

"You people are going to be so educated and collected and everything that you won't look at a lazy mortal like me," mourned Tips. "I see I am going to have to start doing something to stay with the crowd."

"Silly!" laughed Martha, "when you know perfectly well that you are farther along at signals than any of us! Will you receive for me when I practice this afternoon, Tips?"

"Surely I will," responded Tips cordially; "all you need is practice for speed."

"Speaking of speed," interrupted Leslie, "look at that aeroplane dashing over us! Where do those planes we see every day come from and go to, anyway?"

"I asked dad that same thing the other day," replied Peggy, "and he said they were Government planes, most of them, and that they were going between the field at Maywood and the camp at Rockford. Don't you wish

they'd stop long enough to take us aboard?"

"Let's signal them," suggested Tips; "don't pilots know the signal code? We could signal them that we needed help or something, and then, if they had a spark of politeness, they would surely stop."

"Without a doubt," agreed Martha dryly. "But do you happen to know exactly what would happen to you if you did such a thing?"

"To me?" asked Tips in surprise. "Why should anything happen to me? It would just be a joke!"

"You would find that people don't appreciate jokes of that sort," replied Martha. "Of course I don't actually know — we might ask Miss Shaw just to find out for sure. But I'd make a guess that the Girl Scouts would drop you in a hurry. I cannot imagine them caring to have a Scout who would signal a lie — even if she called it a joke. And as for making a false signal to one of Uncle Sam's planes — it makes me shiver to think of all the things that might happen to you before you finished proving that you 'were only playing a little joke.'"

"Something tells me I had better stick to signals that are true and let S.O.S. calls for help wait till I really need them," said Tips

soberly. "I never thought about what a serious and important thing signals are."

"What I want to know," interrupted Polly, "is whether we are going to sit around all day and talk. *I* wanted to swim!"

"Me too," agreed Phil. "Jack, I'll beat you to the lake!"

"Is that so!" retorted Jack scornfully. "If you do, it will be the first time, remember that!"

That ended the exhibit. Books, pictures, and sheets of flowers were carefully packed away for the home journey to-morrow, and a half an hour later every girl was in the sparkling water of little Lake Ellyn.

Miss Shaw suggested that, as each girl wanted to get credit for what she had learned, the logs had better wait till later, judges had better be appointed and a regular record made of diving, swimming, and rescue work. And the girls approved her plan.

Margy, who in a rash moment the day before had volunteered to let herself be a rescued damsel, did such a thriving business that she had to call for help.

"Get somebody else to be 'it,'" she said finally, "or do some dives or something besides

rescuing for a while. I've been hauled out of that lake, face down, up, and every other sort of fashion, till I don't know I am human. Have a heart and get somebody else, Polly."

"Never!" said Polly firmly, "we're nearly through. And, anyway, you promised me first, Margy. Come on, and I'll pull you out in A number 1 style."

"All right," laughed Margy obligingly; "where do I start getting drowned?"

"You may ride out on your precious log," suggested Polly, in an effort to make the task sound agreeable, "and then fall off and call me and I'll swim out and rescue you."

"Don't you dare to be slow," said Margy, as she slipped on to her log and started out into the lake, "because I want to get back in time for the diving exhibit. I have a beautiful dive I want Miss Shaw to see."

"Do something interesting, Marg," whispered Peggy as Margy floated by; "this rescue business is much too easy."

"Watch me," promised Margy, "and see if you think it's too tame this time!"

Very deliberately Margy paddled her log out toward the middle of the lake. Then, before she reached the appointed place for the rescue,

she screamed at the top of her lungs and slipped off the log, into the water — out of sight.

"Something's happened to Margy!" shrieked Polly, as a wild glance toward the spot where the rescue was to have been showed her Margy was nowhere near there yet. And forgetting the careful start she had planned to make, she plunged headlong into the water and swam for dear life.

But Miss Margy had determined not to be rescued too easily. So, when Polly reached her, instead of calmly letting herself be towed to shore as in previous performances, she grabbed tight hold of Polly's neck.

Polly was too startled to notice that such a silly thing was very unreasonable for a fine swimmer like Margy to do; but she was not too startled to remember the directions she had learned so well. She gave Miss Margy a sudden twist that took all play-acting out of her and then she started swimming for shore.

"Give her the medal!" gasped Margy, when she felt the ground under her feet. "She nearly murdered me — that's what she did! And I scared her the best I knew how."

"Do you mean to say," demanded Polly sternly, "that you did all that on purpose?"

"Surely," laughed Margy, recovering her breath; "what did you think had happened?"

"I thought a fish had bitten you, or that you had cramps or something," said Polly.

"You did a good job, anyway, Polly," said Miss Shaw approvingly, "and it was all the better as a test that you didn't know she was acting."

"And how Uncle Art will love you," laughed Martha, "when he finds that you credit him with having fishes in his tiny lake big enough to bite Margy."

"Come on!" interrupted Miss Gilbert; "all out for the Australian crawl race! Ready! Get set! *Go!*"

That race went to Peggy which divided the honors very fairly; an honor point to each of the seniors with Polly coming in for a lot of glory and more than a senior's share of firsts. Then, the contests over, Miss Shaw let the girls stay a half an hour more for fun and frolic anyway they chose.

"Come on, let's do that signal practice," suggested Tips a few hours later, when, with dinner and the rest hour over, the sun warned them that the day was getting on.

"Yes, do," agreed Miss Shaw with suspicious

eagerness. Indeed, if the girls had n't been so engrossed with their own fun and plans, they would have noticed her attempts the last fifteen minutes to get them away from camp. "Now is a fine time, and don't feel hurried about coming back. There is plenty of time before dinner."

"How shall we manage?" said unsuspecting Martha as she gathered up flags and prepared to go with Tips.

"I'll go up on Gravel Point first and signal to you for ten minutes," suggested Tips. "You stand over there in the hollow and signal back. Then we can change places. We might signal sentence about if you like." And she hurried off up toward the hill.

"I know a better way than that," said Martha, calling after her. "I'll stand on that point 'way over there. It will be a lot more fun than staying down in the hollow."

Tips agreed, so Martha went one way and Tips the other — over daisy patches, across gravel beds, and up to opposite sides of the gravel excavations. There the girls practiced signals for half an hour, sending and receiving messages in quick succession.

That was a long time for Tips to stay at

SPELLED IN HER MOST RAPID FASHION, "THIS IS GRAVEL POINT CAMP"

regular work and she began to get restless. "I wish I could send some scare message that would make her jump," she thought to herself, "but with everybody being so thoughtful and solemn this morning, I don't dare. They are probably right, so I might as well be warned. All the same, I'm going to spell something Martha Harding isn't looking for! Just as long as we stick to those regular phrases, of course she gets them immediately."

And, without waiting for a second thought, she ran out to the very edge of the point, looked way off southwest toward the golf links, and spelled in her most rapid fashion, "THIS IS GRAVEL POINT CAMP. SUPPER AT SIX."

But much to Tip's disgust, Martha signaled back at once, "WHY MAKE ME HUNGRY SO EARLY?"

"No use trying to get ahead of her," laughed Tips good-naturedly, and, throwing up both hands to show that she was ready to stop, she gathered up her flags and started down the hill, on the side near the road. Martha ran across the grassy crest of the hill, caught up with her, and together the two girls sauntered down under the trees.

Just as they reached the fence at the foot of

the hill, a great automobile, filled with jolly-looking boys, sped around a curve in the road and came to a standstill before the two surprised girls.

"Why, Herb Johnson!" exclaimed Tips as she recognized a Grant High schoolmate. "Where did you come from?"

"Why, they're all our boys!" exclaimed Martha at the same moment. "How do you happen to be here?"

"I don't know as we 'happen to be here,'" he began; then added quickly, "but seeing we *are* here, do you know any good place where we could get supper?"

"Oh, I wish we had enough for you to eat!" exclaimed Martha, "and that Miss Shaw would invite you to stay! This is our last evening at camp, and it would be wonderful to have a party. Why did n't we think?"

"Let's go ask, anyway," suggested Tips. "We could telephone for food, and we're all such old friends, it does n't really matter if we have n't enough of everything — we can have plenty of fun and that's the main idea."

"Yes, let's ask," agreed Herb. "I'll lock the car and leave it here while we interview the captain."

The boys climbed out and together the whole party hunted up Miss Shaw.

"Yes, I'll be glad to have you stay," said Miss Shaw hospitably when they explained their wishes to her. "The boys won't mind taking chances at getting enough to eat, I know," she added. And if her eyes twinkled a bit as she looked at Herb, he said not a word and nobody else noticed.

"Oh, if we'd only thought!" exclaimed Leslie dolefully, "we could have 'phoned George and he and a crowd from Chicago could have come out, too, and we could have had a regular party. He'd love to drive out."

"Yes, and get lost as we did," said Herb scornfully.

"Lost?" asked Tips; "but you are here now."

"Yes, thanks to your camp signals," said Herb.

"Signals?" inquired Miss Shaw; "we have no camp signals."

"But I read them," said Herb. "You see, we've been Scouts this long time, and we know signals just as well as you girls do. Somebody signaled from the top of that hill. They said, 'This is Gravel Point Camp. Supper at Six.'

We were 'way over there on Roosevelt Road, and we did n't know whether to turn there or go on to Wheaton. When we read that signal, we knew we should turn, and here we are."

As he spoke, Tips actually turned pale. Suppose she had signaled the joke distress signal she had first thought of sending Martha? Suppose somebody 'way off had read it and come, thinking help was needed? Suppose — but she could n't suppose anything more. Certainly this signaling business was a serious thing as Martha had said and was not to be joked about or thought of lightly. She was glad she had discovered that with no harm done to herself or any one else.

But as Tips was thinking, Miss Shaw was talking to Herb.

"I 'm glad the signal helped you, even though Tips did n't guess it would be read so far away. It 's a very good thing for people to know the code — one never can tell when such a method of communication might be useful. But as for telephoning George — it 's a little late for that, I fear. Suppose, instead, you all run and meet the five-five train."

"Why — " began Martha.

"What in the — " started Leslie.

But the whistle of the train gave no chance for either questions or explanations. The Scouts, in a body, made a wild dash for the tiny station, and reached there just in time to see George and seven other Grant High boys step off the train.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Phil, "company for supper! Trainfuls of company! And nothing *like* enough to eat!"

"Don't be so sure about that," laughed Miss Shaw. And before the dazed and happy girls were back at camp, she had explained to them that she and Miss Gilbert and Mrs. Welles had planned a farewell celebration for the last evening; that they had invited all the boys of the Grant High honor society and that there was food and plenty for all.

And a celebration it truly proved to be; ice-cream from Wheaton, marshmallows, two whole big hams, hot rolls from Mrs. Welles's kitchen, cake and other goodies; and last, but by no means least, a full moon to light the "sing" around the camp-fire later in the evening.

After the boys left for home at ten o'clock, the girls gathered around the dying fire for a final song before taps. Now that the party was over, a suspicious hush fell upon the group, and

many a throat was bothered with a lump at the thought of this the final night in camp.

"Girls, I just can't bear to have it all over!" exclaimed Phil; "it's been so wonderful here!" She waved her hand toward the tents, the fireside group, and the daisies, gleaming whitely in the moonlight.

"Let's not have it the last," said Martha; "let's come again next year!"

And with that promise of more fun to come, the mystic call for taps sent them all to happy dreams.

THE END

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